



General Assembly

Seventy-second session

First Committee

21st meeting

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Official Records

Chair: Mr. Bahr Aluloom (Iraq)

In the absence of the Chair, Mr. Sparber (Liechtenstein), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda items 52 (b) and 90 to 106 (continued)

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

The Acting Chair: There remain 24 speakers on the list for the “Regional disarmament and security” cluster. However, in accordance with its adopted timetable, before continuing with the list of speakers on that cluster the Committee will first hear from a panel under the cluster “Disarmament machinery”.

It is now my pleasure to extend a warm welcome to our panellists for this afternoon. They are the President of the Conference on Disarmament, His Excellency Ambassador Julio Herráiz of Spain; the Chair of the United Nations Disarmament Commission, Ms. Gabriela Martinic, Minister Plenipotentiary and Deputy Permanent Representative of Argentina to the United Nations; the Chair of the Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters, Mr. Trevor Findlay, School of Social and Political Sciences, University of Melbourne; and the Director of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, Mr. Jarmo Sareva.

The report of the Conference on Disarmament is contained in document A/72/27; the report of the Disarmament Commission for 2017 has been

issued as document A/72/42; and the report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters is contained in document A/72/185. Finally, the note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Director of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research is contained in document A/72/154.

I will first give our panellists the floor to make their statements. Thereafter, we will change to an informal mode in order to afford delegations an opportunity to ask questions. I urge our panellists to kindly keep their statements concise so as to ensure that we have adequate time for an interactive discussion on the subject.

I now give the floor to Mr. Herráiz.

Mr. Herráiz (Spain), President, Conference on Disarmament (spoke in Spanish): I thank the First Committee for the opportunity to brief it, in the context of this panel discussion, on the report of the Conference on Disarmament (A/72/27), adopted by consensus on 14 September in Geneva.

I believe that it would be difficult to discuss the Conference on Disarmament without addressing the deadlock in negotiations that has afflicted it for more than two decades. Nonetheless, I would like to convey a constructive message that should strengthen our resolve, because disillusionment can never be an option.

At the 2017 session, the Secretary-General urged the Conference to work assiduously to reach a consensus-based agreement that would provide rational and diplomatic solutions leading to the development of the tools required to build mutual trust and international

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stability. During the high-level segment, Foreign Ministers and other dignitaries voiced their concern about the situation in the Conference, calling for it to make headway on the international disarmament agenda. During the session, on 7 March, the Russian Federation presented a draft programme of work on an international agreement to counter chemical and biological terrorism. Discussions were also held on increasing the membership of the Conference, which should be reviewed at regular intervals, in accordance with rule 2 of its rules of procedure. The fact that 27 States have requested to join the Conference since 1982 reflects the ongoing interest in the forum, despite the challenges it is facing.

As the Committee is aware, a Working Group on the Way Ahead was established at the 2017 session, at the initiative of the Romanian presidency, pursuant to decision CD/2090. The Group's three objectives are to, first, take stock of the progress on all agenda items of the Conference; secondly, identify issues for substantive work under the agenda, taking into account the efforts and priorities of the international community; and, lastly, identify common ground for a programme of work with a negotiating mandate. I would like to thank Ambassador Lynn of Myanmar for his efforts as Chair of the Working Group, and I thank the facilitators as well. Although the outcome of the discussions was useful, the report adopted was a procedural one, and it was not possible to arrive at agreed recommendations. Nonetheless, the reports were transmitted personally by the Chair and the facilitators as official documents of the Conference to provide us with some fundamental insights.

The Working Group's meetings on nuclear disarmament, chaired by Ambassador Lynn, considered multilateral efforts on the path towards a world free of nuclear weapons and identified viewpoints and priorities from a legal and institutional perspective on which agreement might be reached, but the Conference remains divided on methods to address the issue. Greater exploratory work will be required at the 2018 session, bearing in mind that nuclear disarmament is a priority for member States.

Discussions facilitated by Ambassador Biontino of Germany were also held on a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices, addressing its scope of implementation and objectives as well as definitions, the issue of verification and legal and institutional

aspects. Political and technical issues were addressed from a broader perspective but, given the inevitable political component inherent in the latter, it is vital that they be addressed in an integrated manner. There was general agreement on the fact that negotiations on a treaty would take place in the Conference as soon as possible, with a view to bringing about a world free of nuclear weapons. The Conference on Disarmament is considered the most suitable forum for such negotiations, given its historic role, the consensus rule, the importance of taking account of vital security concerns and the presence of all relevant actors.

Discussions on item 3 of the agenda, on negative security assurances, also steered by Ambassador Biontino, included a general exchange of views about the current review of assurances. A debate took place on potential issues, factors, challenges and opportunities in the context of a possible negotiating mandate, including previous decisions adopted by the Conference. Discussions on the prevention of an arms race in outer space, facilitated by Mr. Lagos of Chile, enabled the presentation of a detailed description of the various positions of delegations. Although clear differences were noted, all delegations acknowledged the importance of the maintenance of security, stability and prosperity in that respect. Lastly, the Working Group reviewed agenda items 5, 6 and 7. Discussions were facilitated by Ambassador Ambrazevich of Belarus on new systems of weapons of mass destruction, the broader disarmament programme and transparency in armaments. It should be acknowledged that member States had differing views on the possibility of addressing those issues in the Conference on Disarmament.

The Conference encountered some challenges with regard to the exercise of the normal functions of its Presidents. It is my view that strengthening a shared, constructive vision is the best way to restore the Conference's negotiating mandate on disarmament issues. As is required, I have undertaken initial informal consultations with the next President, Sri Lanka, to coordinate and facilitate the future work of the Conference. I mentioned to the next presidency the two priorities that, in my view, would make it possible to adopt a more realistic approach to developing a potential programme of work. First, it is important to continue working on a possible negotiating mandate on a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. Such a treaty would be legally binding, non-discriminatory,

multilateral and verifiable, with special reference to past and future production of fissile material, and its role would be determined in terms of strategic stability and the principle of undiminished security for all. Of course, it is also vital to continue to explore other alternatives in the areas of nuclear disarmament and outer space, as set out in the agenda of the Conference.

In conclusion, I would like to recall what the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Mrs. Izumi Nakamitsu, said at a recent plenary meeting of the Conference: that despite the differences among member States, we have all been able to forge a consensus — a point of common convergence — that reflects a strong awareness of the need to take serious decisions on the situation facing the Conference. We would all like to restore the Conference's negotiating mandate, and its member States have the power to do that.

The Acting Chair: I now invite Ms. Martinic to address the Committee.

Ms. Martinic: It is a great privilege for me to be part of this panel today, particularly in the light of the results of the substantive session of the Disarmament Commission this year. As delegations are aware, the Disarmament Commission is a deliberative body. It had been producing sets of recommendations for quite a while and then, for 18 years, it experienced a kind of paralysis. This time around, when we started the 2017 substantive session, it was the third year of the cycle of consideration of two items: nuclear disarmament and confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms. We faced a very difficult situation. We had no Bureau and no Chairs for the two Working Groups. Nevertheless, little by little, we managed to put together a full Bureau. I am also very pleased to inform the Committee that the Bureau was almost 50-50 in terms of gender representation. We were also able to get two extremely skilful Chairs for the two Working Groups, Mr. Wilmer Méndez Graterol of Venezuela and Ms. Lachezara Stoeva of Bulgaria. They did a commendable job in helping delegations foster dialogue and understanding.

When we started the session, my main suggestion to delegations was to try to listen to one another's concerns and understand them as if they were their own. From my perspective, that was the only way to help them understand each other and reach a compromise. That is what happened this year at the substantive session of the Disarmament Commission. Delegations

managed to have in-depth discussions and, at the end of the day, they reached an understanding. This is what multilateralism has to offer — a win-win for all.

At the same time, we also held informal consultations on a third item, transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space. That proved to be a very constructive exercise in terms of starting to explore an item. Again, the discussions and exchange were very positive. We will consider those items, as well as the item on nuclear disarmament, in the next cycle.

As I was saying, with a great deal of patience, goodwill and listening, a compromise is possible. And as I said, multilateralism offers a win-win situation for all. It takes time, it is difficult and often it is very frustrating. As I said at the final meeting of the 2017 substantive session of the Commission, "like a good Malbec, it requires time" (see A/CN.10/PV.367). I therefore encourage delegations to follow that path.

The Acting Chair: I next invite Mr. Findlay to address the Committee.

Mr. Findlay: I have the great pleasure of reporting to delegations on the work of the Secretary-General's Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters for 2017.

As delegations are aware, the Board also acts as the trustees of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR). My presentation will therefore deal with both the substantive issues on the Board's agenda and the trustees' deliberations on UNIDIR. Given the limited time, I will focus on the recommendations that we made to the Secretary-General as a result of our deliberations.

The Board also adopted and proposed several measures during the year to improve its own performance, which are mentioned in our report. I will not go into detail in my presentation, but I am happy to talk about them in the discussion period.

First, with regard to the substantive issues on the agenda of the Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters, the Secretary-General set out three agenda items for the Board to consider in 2017. The first was the threat of cyberattacks by terrorists on nuclear facilities and the potential role of cybermeans in threats to biosecurity. The second agenda item was the impact of artificial intelligence (AI) on international security, and the third was a review of the implementation of recommendations contained in the 2002 United Nations study on disarmament and non-proliferation education.

As the Committee can see, there was a wide variety of agenda items.

The Board was especially pleased that the Secretary-General asked us to consider two frontier technological issues facing international security: cyber and artificial intelligence. In order to tackle the broad range of technological issues facing Member States and the United Nations, the Board expressed its support for the Secretary-General's idea of forming a scientific advisory group to keep him informed of critical scientific and technological advances that have security implications. Given the complexity and rapid evolution of such fields, the Board also proposed that its own capacities be bolstered by appointing members with expertise in science and technology, as well as industry, especially information technology. Given that the Board was able only to scratch the surface of the artificial intelligence issue, we recommend that it remain on our agenda for further consideration in 2018.

Let me turn to the cyberthreat to nuclear security and biosecurity, a topic that resulted from a narrowing of a previous one that included cyberthreats to all types of weapons of mass destruction. The Board concluded, however, after discussing this issue last year, that the areas requiring the most urgent attention were cyberthreats to nuclear and biofacilities, owing to the potentially catastrophic nature of successful attacks. In this respect, the Board welcomed the establishment of the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism and recommended that it include cyberterrorism in its remit.

The Board endorses the idea of the United Nations becoming the key norm entrepreneur in the cyberrealm. The United Nations is well placed to involve all stakeholders, including States, international organizations, industry and civil society, in crafting the necessary international governance arrangements. The Board recognizes the difficult trade-offs that have to be made between strengthening cybersecurity on the one hand and protecting civil liberties on the other.

On nuclear security, the Board expressed its support for the central role of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), and called for more attention and resources to be devoted to countering the cyberthreat to nuclear materials and installations. The IAEA could, for instance, become the global repository of information on potential and failed cyberthreats against peaceful nuclear installations.

With regard to biosecurity, the institutional situation is quite different, of course. There is no standing verification or implementation body for the Biological Weapons Convention, notwithstanding the small Implementation Support Unit in Geneva. The Board suggests that the Secretary-General seek the views of Member States regarding multilateral approaches, including institutional measures to deal with the cyberthreat to biosecurity.

Let me now turn to artificial intelligence (AI). The Board strongly welcomes the attention that the Secretary-General has given already to artificial intelligence issues and urges him to continue to use every opportunity to bring the challenges and complexity of such issues to the notice of Member States. Artificial intelligence represents both an opportunity and a challenge to international security. It could, for instance, be harnessed to improve the monitoring and verification of compliance with international agreements, including in the area of disarmament. We note that the International Telecommunications Union is organizing policy discussions on AI as a public good, but AI could also be used to subvert international security. The emergence of semi-autonomous weapon systems is already challenging existing legal norms, and fully autonomous weapons pose an even greater danger.

In order to enhance international consideration of this issue, the Board proposed that interested Member States submit a draft resolution during this session of the General Assembly to seek the views of all Member States. Furthermore, we suggested that Member States consider commissioning UNIDIR to carry out a study complemented by an expert panel on the likely impact of artificial intelligence on international security. I note that India has circulated draft resolution A/C.1/72/L.52 calling for a high-level panel on the broader issue of science and security that would be assisted by UNIDIR and its work. It might be expected that AI would feature prominently in the work of such a panel should it eventuate.

As trustees of UNIDIR, the Board welcomes the proposed involvement of the Institute in supporting the panel. Providing objective fact-based research input into such panels is a role for which UNIDIR is eminently suited.

Let me now turn briefly to disarmament and non-proliferation education. Following its review of the 34 recommendations contained in the 2002 United

Nations study on disarmament and non-proliferation education, the Board concluded that the study remains, rather remarkably after 15 years, both relevant and comprehensive. To draw attention to its continued utility, we suggest that it be reissued with a new foreword by the Secretary-General and the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs. It should be distributed at all relevant United Nations gatherings. The Board commended the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs for its work in implementing the recommendations for the study and encouraged it to consider additional creative methods. These could include awards for best educators, journalists and writers in the field, the appointment of peer ambassadors, seminars on best practice in disarmament education, and online debates.

However, the Board noted that there continues to be a disappointing response by Member States to requests from the Secretariat to report on their efforts on disarmament and non-proliferation education. New methods need to be found to encourage a better response. In particular, reporting should be made as technically easy as possible, given the increasing demands on Member States for reporting on all manner of issues. A release of the 2002 study would be a good opportunity to remind them of the need to report.

Finally, with regard to UNIDIR, following extensive briefings by the director and the staff of the Institute, the Board, meeting as UNIDIR's trustees, welcomed the message that the Institute has successfully weathered the considerable challenges of recent years. This included the change management process, the introduction of Umoja and international-public-sector accounting standards, and not least funding and institutional challenges. The Board has been continually impressed by the sheer number of projects and activities undertaken by the Institute over the past years and the quality of its research output, notwithstanding the challenges it faced.

As required by UNIDIR's statute, at its June meeting the Board considered the question of a subvention for UNIDIR from the regular United Nations budget. We strongly recommended that it be approved. The trustees also strongly supported a one-off increase in the regular budget's subvention for the 2018-2019 biennium, as recommended in resolution 70/69, on the thirty-fifth anniversary of UNIDIR. The Board noted that the resolution had been adopted by consensus (see A/70/PV.67). The trustees strongly urge that this one-off

subvention be proceeded with. It is vital to ensure that the core institutional funding of the Institute is boosted so that its research projects, which often do not come with their own institutional core funding, can proceed.

The Board also supported the recommendation of the Bowen report, the 2015 internal review of UNIDIR, that the minimum institutional structure for UNIDIR should be five posts. In order to ensure the operational sustainability and independence of the Institute, the Board believes the annual subvention should be increased to cover the costs of all institutional staff. That would include the position of chief of research, which would further strengthen research design and integrity. The trustees believe that a full complement of staff is necessary for UNIDIR to fulfil its potential.

The Board also looks forward to the independent third-party assessment of UNIDIR expected to be carried out in early 2018, to be followed by a report by the Secretary-General. The trustees stress that the sustainable funding and operating model that is expected to be set out in that report must respect the statute's mandate and objectives for the Institute.

In conclusion, the trustees of UNIDIR are confident that with the continuing support of Member States, not least through an increased annual subvention, along with voluntary contributions from Member States, as well as collaborative projects with other research institutes, UNIDIR has a bright future as a critical component of the United Nations disarmament machinery.

The Acting Chair: I now give the floor to Mr. Sareva.

Mr. Sareva (United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research): It is easy to follow Mr. Findlay's remarks, which extensively covered the financial situation of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) and the much appreciated recommendations of the Board of Trustees.

This is the third time that I have had the privilege of joining this thematic discussion representing UNIDIR. Since I have been both Chair and Secretary of the First Committee, joining this panel as UNIDIR's representative is of particular personal importance to me.

Let me start with what usually comes at the very end of statements like this. United Nations staff are every so often described as the Organization's "most important resource" by Secretaries-General and by

other senior management, and they are absolutely right. I would therefore like to acknowledge and thank my colleagues at UNIDIR. Not only are they the Institute's most important resource, they are also *the* resource of UNIDIR. It is indeed thanks to the dedication and commitment of our staff, and the continued high quality of their work, that UNIDIR has been able to stay in business. Without them, no amount of fundraising would have mattered, and pleas for political support would have fallen on deaf ears.

I have also been amazed by the supportive working environment in UNIDIR. Everybody pitches in and shows flexibility when necessary. In a small institute that operates in an environment with often suddenly arising contingencies, this is a recipe that truly helps.

I concluded my statement last year (see A/C.1/71/PV.19) by noting that an institute such as UNIDIR will always be only as good — and as attractive to its current and potential funders — as the quality of its most recent substantive work. That is our reputation. In other words, we are constantly held accountable, which is actually one of our strengths. With a highly competent and dedicated staff, we have been able to deliver, and our reputation remains solid. It has been a privilege to work with our staff.

My report on the activities of the Institute for the period from January to December 2016 and the proposed programme of work and financial plan for 2017 and 2018 can be found, as already noted, in document A/72/154. The report contains a very exhaustive list of our projects and activities in 2016 and of the first several months of 2017. An even more exhaustive description, including all project reports and other publications, as well as audio recordings of most of our events, appears on our website www.unidir.org, and on our Swiss webpage at www.unidir.ch. I would encourage those Committee members who have not done so to acquaint themselves with our website and make use of its resources.

I will now draw the Committee's attention to the second chapter of my report, which briefly describes UNIDIR's research agenda, or road map, as it can also be described. It was developed subsequent to a process of stakeholder consultations and reflection on our research objectives and activities, as a contribution to UNIDIR's 2017-2020 strategic planning exercise. Let me briefly explain the rationale behind such an agenda.

At present, as many Committee members know, UNIDIR organizes its work into five programmes:

weapons of mass destruction, emerging security issues, conventional weapons, security and society, and disarmament machinery. As it may not always be evident how our projects and activities fit together, and as some themes of our research or specific research questions may intersect with different programmes, it has not always been easy to describe them only in the context of those individual programmes. We also felt that a research agenda — at one point we called it our plank — could more clearly signal the Institute's research objectives and its work towards them, and thereby strengthen UNIDIR's case for funding some projects it has identified as being of particular value or priority. Finally, we felt that a research agenda could have an important communicative role to our funders, other stakeholders and our governing body, our Board of Trustees.

Let me stress that this research agenda is not meant to bind our choices about which research to undertake down the line, if it is felt that those choices would better fulfil the aims of our mandate under those circumstances or because of resource constraints. We will be revisiting the research agenda's thematic priorities and take into account the experiences of research staff.

I note in my report that UNIDIR's administrative and financial footing is now more stable than it has been for some time. I also noted what the Chair of our Board said in that regard. However, I also note in my report that we cannot take this stability for granted in the high-cost environment of the United Nations system. It is important to keep in mind that there is a persistent need to ensure UNIDIR's long-term operational sustainability while maintaining its autonomy.

I must stress with concern that while we have continued to do very well in mobilizing earmarked resources for projects, UNIDIR continues to face an increasingly challenging environment in financing the institutional framework necessary to undertake project activities in compliance with the rules, regulations and requirements of the United Nations. States are increasingly unable to contribute to the institutional operations budget or funding not limited to the implementation or duration of a specific project or activity. This trend has unfortunately been particularly pronounced this year, when unearmarked funding to our institutional operations budget is — to date — falling substantially below last year's figures.

I want to point out that any end-of-year surplus that would appear in our financial statements mostly reflects activities that we had already committed to undertaking the following year. For example, the surplus noted in annex II, table 1 of my report for the year 2016 — last year — amounts to just over \$1.1 million, but more than 80 per cent of the surplus indicated in that annex is actually earmarked for activities to be undertaken in 2017. It is therefore not money that is lying around for us to use as we please.

It is against this backdrop that I want to recall resolution 70/69, the quinquennial UNIDIR resolution of two years ago, adopted on the Institute's thirty-fifth anniversary. In paragraph 9 of that consensus resolution, which was adopted following protracted informal consultations very ably led by the French delegation and reflecting a delicate compromise (see A/70/PV.67), the General Assembly called for an exceptional one-off regular budget funding proposal for UNIDIR for the biennium 2018-2019.

Those members who were present at the time of the adoption of that resolution in this Committee will recall that in an oral statement made by the then-High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, the Committee learned that an internal assessment would be carried out in 2016 to inform that funding proposal (see A/70/PV.67). That assessment subsequently concluded that a core staff of four was deemed appropriate for UNIDIR's essential institutional activity.

On the basis of that internal assessment, the Secretary-General's proposed programme budget for 2018-2019 does include a resource request towards an increase in the regular budget subvention as a one-time measure to preserve the future of the Institute in line with the request made by the First Committee in paragraph 9 of resolution 70/69. This request, as we just heard, was strongly endorsed by UNIDIR's Board of Trustees at its meeting in June this year. I am also very pleased that the United Nations Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) has endorsed the increase not once but twice.

That request is now before the Fifth Committee of the General Assembly as part of its consideration of the biennial budget proposal for 2018-2019. While that Committee is the appropriate Main Committee of the General Assembly entrusted with responsibilities for administrative and budgetary matters, it is quite unusual for it to reverse the endorsement of the ACABQ's

recommendations. Any action taken in that regard by the Fifth Committee based on what is an illusory surplus in UNIDIR's accounts would, against the backdrop of a continued downward trend in institutional funding, go against the compromise reached in 2015.

As Committee members will also recall, paragraph 10 of resolution 70/69 requested the Secretary-General to commission an assessment by an independent third party with a mandate to prepare a report on the future structural, financial, administrative and operational aspects of the Institute, outlining a sustainable and stable funding structure and operating model, as required to achieve the mandate and objectives of the Institute beyond the biennium 2018-2019 and to report in this regard — taking into account the aforementioned assessment — to the Assembly at its seventy-third session, that is, a year from now. The additional resource requirements for the external assessment are also included in the Secretary-General's proposed programme budget.

If that independent third-party assessment is to be able to properly inform the report requested from the Secretary-General, it will have to be carried out early in 2018 and concluded no later than mid-spring next year. The General Assembly, through the First Committee, may then wish to take action based on the two reports. It is hoped that such action will ensure a sustainable and stable funding structure and operating model for UNIDIR, as requested in resolution 70/69.

At the same time, the one-time measure mandated by the resolution and included in the proposed programme budget is indeed necessary to help preserve the Institute's short-term future, as requested in paragraph 9 of the resolution. I would like to remind the Committee once again that paragraphs 9 and 10 were adopted by consensus as a result of a delicate compromise reached in the informal consultations.

I have dwelt at such length on UNIDIR's subvention and the Secretary-General's request for its increase because to say that it greatly matters for UNIDIR is an understatement. This is an extremely important issue for the Institute, and one for which we have worked very hard with our friends and sponsors over the past three years. I hope that when Committee members have a chance to discuss the matter with their colleagues in the Fifth Committee, they will make a case for ensuring UNIDIR's future as called for by resolution 70/69, and as endorsed by the ACABQ.

I would like to conclude by briefly raising one more issue, that of partnerships. The reason for highlighting this issue is the fact that enhanced partnerships are every so often prescribed to us as an alternative business model, primarily to cut costs, and that there is sometimes a misconception that we do not actively pursue them or that we pursue them only with a geographically limited number of partners. UNIDIR does not carry out research for the sake of research; rather, what we do is fulfil our mandate by providing fact-based analysis and offering new ideas for making progress on a range of peace and security issues that relate to disarmament. We also act as a convener and facilitator in multilateral disarmament-related matters. In short, through our research and related activities, we assist the international community in improving its disarmament and security policies, programmes and practices.

Any partnerships that we enter into must serve those ends, and to do so, they must be flexible and provide concrete added value to our activities. To be successful, a partnership requires a firm commitment and a lot of work from both sides. Standing memorandums of understanding, for example, can easily become dead letters, at best, or burdens, at worst. Ad hoc arrangements are therefore usually much better.

Some Member States see partnerships as a good way to cut costs and lighten UNIDIR's footprint in Geneva. This could easily result in UNIDIR rubber-stamping work conducted by national research institutes and would further limit the Institute's capacity to carry out the pro bono consultative and advisory services that Member States greatly appreciate and expect of it.

With regard to the number of UNIDIR partnerships, I would like to note that to date, in 2017, our conventional arms programme alone has partnered with a total of 76 entities, including Governments, United Nations system entities, non-governmental organizations and international organizations. Many of them either come from or operate in the global South. For example, five of the 13 Governments with which we have worked — Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Somalia and South Sudan — are in Africa. Among the United Nations system entities, the single largest group is made up of those in the field.

Finally, I would like to recognize the highly fruitful cooperation we have had with the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA).

The past few years have been particularly good, owing to collaboration on substantive studies and UNIDIR's continued role as UNODA's institutional consultant in a number of groups of governmental experts. We fully expect that mutually beneficial relationship to continue and strengthen.

The Acting Chair: In accordance with established practice, I shall now suspend the meeting at this point in order to give delegations the opportunity to have an interactive discussion with our panellists through an informal question-and-answer session.

The meeting was suspended at 3.50 p.m. and resumed at 3.55 p.m.

The Acting Chair: On behalf of all delegations, I would like to thank our panellists for their participation and their statements.

The Committee will now resume its consideration of the cluster "Regional disarmament and security". I once again urge all speakers to kindly observe the established time limits.

Mr. Umarov (Kazakhstan): The overall disarmament process and the maintenance of global security and stability are closely interrelated and depend on countries' regional efforts. Kazakhstan is concerned about the fact that instability and growing tensions persist in various regions of the world. Not only are regional disarmament and security complicated, they also take us away from attending to progress.

Like others, we believe that the situation in North-East Asia and the Middle East, as well as in other parts of the world, remains extremely tense and unpredictable. Efforts to resolve the issue in North Korea appear futile as we approach the point of no return. We therefore propose that the parties concerned reduce tensions and consider all possible options.

The Middle East also requires our immediate attention. It is obvious that the very first and necessary step is to ensure peace, stability and trust, for which the creation of a zone free of nuclear weapons in the region is vital. The establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones is one of the most effective methods of preventing proliferation. The President of Kazakhstan has proposed uniting the efforts of all States to create nuclear-weapon-free zones so as to provide the impetus to expand such zones throughout the world.

With regard to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), we would like to see it continue to be fully and effectively implemented. Full compliance with the JCPOA has had a significant impact on normalizing the situation in the region and beyond. Adhering to the requirements of the Plan of Action will also promote economic revitalization.

Kazakhstan would like to express its appreciation to the Regional Disarmament Branch of the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) and the three Regional Centres for Peace and Disarmament for their contribution to regional and global disarmament, peace and security. In particular, we are cooperating to the Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific in support of its outreach activities. We therefore encourage Member States to continue to make financial and political contributions to the services and programmes offered by the Regional Centres.

We also support and contribute to the disarmament fellowship programme of UNODA, which trains future advocates. Visiting fellows from various regions of the world foster understanding and collective multilateral action on disarmament and security ideas.

The Chair took the Chair.

In conclusion, I would again like to emphasize that Kazakhstan is committed to making progress on regional disarmament issues, considering them to be an essential and integral part of building a global security architecture.

Mr. Hassan (Egypt): Egypt fully associates itself with the statements made on behalf of the Group of Arab States and the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries on this cluster (see A/C.1/72/PV.20), and would like to make the following remarks.

The Middle East remains the most pressing regional issue where the objective of establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone is concerned. This long-standing issue virtually constitutes a fourth pillar of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), and, as long as that pillar is still missing, the sustainability and credibility of the NPT, which is considered the cornerstone of the non-proliferation regime, will continue to erode.

Since 1974, the General Assembly has adopted an annual resolution on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. Moreover, the 1995 Review Conference of the Parties to the NPT

adopted a resolution on the establishment of a zone in the Middle East free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, which remains an integral element of the Treaty's extension package. Nevertheless, there has always been an insistence on blocking any progress on the issue.

The 2010 NPT Review Conference adopted a relatively ambitious plan on the implementation of the 1995 resolution that included mandating the Secretary-General and the sponsors of the 1995 resolution to convene a conference on the establishment of the zone. We are still of the view that the right way forward was outlined in the proposal presented by the Non-Aligned Movement in the 2005 NPT Review Conference, which was acceptable to all but three of the States parties to the Treaty.

In her introductory remarks, the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs rightly stated that

“[t]he 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” (A/C.1/72/PV.2, p. 4).

Egypt believes that this is the appropriate logic for guiding international efforts to bring us closer to achieving peace and security in the Middle East through serious and tangible disarmament measures.

In that spirit, we continue to seek the implementation of the 1995 resolution by attempting to create a clear road map aimed at launching the necessary technical and political negotiations to conclude a legally binding treaty establishing a zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East. We believe that the United Nations and the Secretary-General have a central role to play in supporting that process. Convening a conference on freeing the Middle East of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, on the basis of the principle of arrangements freely arrived at, should be considered a historic opportunity for all States in the region and beyond to take a major step towards achieving sustainable peace and collective security for all States of the region.

The Chair: I give the floor to the representative of Pakistan to introduce draft resolutions A/C.1/72/L.12, A/C.1/72/L.11 and A/C.1/72/L.13/Rev.1.

Mr. Saeed (Pakistan): The General Assembly has long recognized that global peace and security depend in large measure on stability at the regional and subregional levels. In view of the inextricable relationship between regional stability and international peace, the Charter of the United Nations itself acknowledges and provides for regional arrangements to ensure global peace and security. In the post-Cold War era, most threats to peace and security arise mainly among States located in the same region or subregion. International and bilateral efforts towards disarmament and arms control are therefore reinforced and complemented by regional approaches.

The final document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (resolution S-10/2), the efforts of the United Nations Disarmament Commission and the resolutions of the First Committee have repeatedly affirmed the need for the simultaneous pursuit of regional and global approaches, including agreements in the area of disarmament and arms limitation. Through these mechanisms and the normative framework, the international community has endorsed two well-recognized and tested tools: conventional arms-control and confidence-building measures, in particular at the regional and subregional levels.

Several regions of the world have benefited from the application of principles and guidelines in the areas of conventional arms-control and confidence-building measures developed and agreed at the United Nations. It is important to recall and reiterate some of these principles. They include the preservation of balance in the defence capabilities of States at the lowest level of armaments and military forces; the special responsibility of militarily significant States and States with larger military capabilities in promoting agreements for regional security; and undiminished security and the pursuit of disarmament measures in an equitable and balanced manner.

Regional arrangements for disarmament and arms limitation should accord priority to addressing the most destabilizing military capabilities and imbalances in both the conventional and non-conventional spheres. In regions characterized by tension and disputes, achieving a stable balance of conventional forces and weapons through cooperative regional initiatives is imperative.

Confidence-building measures have proved their efficacy over the years at the regional and subregional levels, particularly in the areas of arms control and disarmament. They also have a positive correlation with international peace and security. As General Assembly resolutions and United Nations Disarmament Commission guidelines have affirmed, regional confidence-building measures must be tailored to the specifics of a region and should begin with simple arrangements on transparency, openness and risk reduction, before the States concerned find themselves in a position to pursue more substantive arms-control and disarmament measures.

Confidence-building measures are significant in that they can lead to the creation of favourable conditions for the peaceful settlement of existing disputes and help resolve situations that could lead to international friction. However, they should not become an end in themselves but should rather be pursued in conjunction with sincere efforts to settle disputes peacefully in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations. They can significantly contribute to a global political environment conducive to promoting international agreements on disarmament and arms limitation.

Pakistan feels privileged to have spearheaded initiatives on regional disarmament, conventional arms control and confidence-building measures at the United Nations for several years now. A practical expression of Pakistan's commitment to promoting such globally agreed goals is reflected in the draft resolutions it submits every year in the First Committee on regional disarmament, confidence-building measures in the regional and subregional context and conventional-arms control at the regional and subregional levels.

As in previous years, the delegation of Pakistan has this year submitted draft resolutions on those topics (A/C.1/72/L.12, A/C.1/72/L.11 and A/C.1/72/L.13/Rev.1), recognizing the significance of regional approaches to arms control, disarmament and confidence-building for international peace and stability, and the complementarity between regional and global approaches. We look forward to the continued support of member States for the adoption of these draft resolutions this year as well.

Mr. Kazi (Bangladesh): Bangladesh aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/72/PV.20).

Bangladesh acknowledges the critical importance of regional disarmament and security in the maintenance of international peace and security. In the light of the unprecedented and overwhelming exodus of the Rohingya from Myanmar's Rakhine state over the past two months, we want to remind the member States concerned to reconsider their arms transfers to States where such weapons may be deployed in order to commit serious human rights violations.

Bangladesh gives priority to unconditional and legally binding assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons by nuclear-weapon States. The notion of strategic stability, based on nuclear deterrence, remains an area of particular concern for us. We subscribe to the notion that peaceful dialogue and diplomacy remain the best options for building a sound regional security architecture. Enhanced regional cooperation, including for transparency and confidence-building measures, continues to be critical to creating conditions conducive to sustained and meaningful dialogue on disarmament and security issues. Bangladesh adds its voice to the call for establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones in the Middle East and other parts of the world in the interest of achieving sustainable peace, security and stability there.

Bangladesh recognizes the useful role played by the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific (UNRCPD) in convening relevant experts and policymakers from the region to share views on issues of common concern. In our national context, we have recently benefited from UNRCPD's customized support in promoting the implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons as well as the International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons. Its technical assistance in this area has also enabled us to identify the existing gaps and challenges in our legal, policy and institutional arrangements designed to ensure compliance with the relevant provisions of the Arms Trade Treaty. We can only reaffirm the critical importance of regional cooperation in effectively addressing the challenges posed by the illicit trade in small arms and ammunition, and we appreciate UNRCPD's efforts in this regard.

We look forward to further expanding our partnership with UNRCPD to support our ongoing work on developing a comprehensive national control

list in fulfilment of the obligations under Security Council resolution 1540 (2004), among other things. Bangladesh recognizes the Centre's work in promoting the role and representation of women in disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control. We thank the Government of Nepal for hosting it and look forward to continuing to be a sponsor of the draft resolution on the Regional Centre, as we have in previous years.

In conclusion, we request that UNRCPD further strengthen its efforts to promote and disseminate disarmament education and research in the region drawing on the useful resources at its disposal.

The Chair: I give the floor to the representative of Cameroon to introduce draft resolution A/C.1/72/L.20.

Mr. Tommo Monthe (Cameroon) (*spoke in French*): In its capacity as Chair of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa, Cameroon is taking the floor in today's thematic debate on behalf of the countries of Central Africa in order to introduce draft resolution A/C.1/72/L.20, entitled "Regional confidence-building measures: activities of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa", submitted annually by the countries of the subregion on the activities of the Committee.

In substance and in its preamble, the draft resolution recalls the guiding principles of general and complete disarmament adopted at the tenth special session of the General Assembly, which was its first devoted to disarmament. It recalls first the previous resolutions of the General Assembly on the topic, in particular resolution 71/79 of 5 December 2016. It also recalls the Committee's role in promoting arms control, disarmament, non-proliferation and development in the Central African subregion. It also reaffirms the importance and relevance of the Committee as an instrument of preventive diplomacy in the subregional architecture for the promotion of peace and security.

A new element of the draft resolution takes into account the revitalization of the Committee's activities, decided at its forty-fourth meeting, held in Yaoundé from 29 May to 2 June, in order to enhance its contribution to the fulfilment of the peace agenda. Also in the preamble and as a further development, the text takes note of the entry into force on 8 March of the Central African Convention for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons, Their Ammunition and All Parts and Components That Can Be Used for Their

Manufacture, Repair and Assembly, also known as the Kinshasa Convention, and the third Conference of States Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty, held in Geneva from 11 to 15 September.

In the operative part of this year's text, the draft resolution reaffirms its support for efforts aimed at promoting confidence-building measures taken at the regional and subregional levels with a view to easing tensions and conflicts in Central Africa and fostering lasting peace, stability and sustainable development in the subregion. It welcomes the adoption, at the forty-fourth meeting of the Committee, of the plan of action and timetable of activities for the implementation of the regional strategy to combat terrorism and trafficking in small arms and light weapons in Central Africa, which was adopted in Libreville on 26 November 2015.

It also welcomes the measures taken at the forty-fourth ministerial meeting with a view to revitalizing the activities of the Standing Advisory Committee, and takes note of the institutionalization of the Committee's function as the focal point for following up on recommendations in relation to the relevant national institutions. It also welcomes and encourages the initiative of the States members of the Permanent Consultative Committee to develop collaborations and synergies with the Economic Community of Central African States, in particular the Commission for Defence and Security, including with a view to promoting the implementation of the regional strategy to combat terrorism and the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in Central Africa.

The draft resolution encourages Member States to provide assistance to States members of the Committee that have ratified the Arms Trade Treaty and encourages States that have not yet done so to ratify the Treaty. It encourages the States members of the Committee and other interested States to provide financial support for the implementation of the Kinshasa Convention and requests the Secretary-General to convene the first conference of States parties on 8 March 2018, in accordance with article 34, paragraph 3, of the Convention.

The text also requests the United Nations Regional Office to support the efforts of States members of the Committee and the Economic Community of Central African States to implement the integrated strategy to combat terrorism and the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in Central Africa. It specifically

calls on the international community to support the States concerned in their efforts to implement their disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes, and requests that the Security Council mandate the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic to support and assist the defence and security forces of the Central African Republic in their efforts to stabilize the country, particularly in the east. It urges Member States to honour their financial commitments in order to ensure the predictable and sustainable operation of the Interregional Coordination Centre for Maritime Safety and Security in the Gulf of Guinea and the Regional Coordination Centre for Maritime Security in Central Africa.

In the light of the scale of the refugee phenomenon and the burden it imposes on already weak economies in the subregion, the text requests the Secretary-General and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to continue to assist countries in Central Africa in addressing the problems of refugees and internally displaced persons in their territories. Furthermore, the draft resolution requests that the Secretary-General and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights continue to provide their full support to the effective functioning of the Subregional Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Central Africa.

The draft resolution welcomes the contribution that Cameroon made to the United Nations Trust Fund for the Committee and reminds the States members of the Committee of their previous commitments in that regard. It thanks the Standing Advisory Committee for its efforts to address the threats to cross-border security in Central Africa. Lastly, it expresses its satisfaction to the Secretary-General for his support for the revitalization of the Standing Advisory Committee and asks him to continue to provide the necessary assistance for the success of its regular meetings.

In conclusion, I would like to remind the Committee that over the years this draft resolution has always been adopted by consensus, and I hope that this will be the case this year.

Ms. Sánchez Rodríguez (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation wishes to align itself with the statement made on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/72/PV.20).

Cuba is proud to belong to a region whose leaders, in an unprecedented act, formally declared it a zone of peace during the second summit of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, held in Havana, in order to eliminate once and for all the use and threat of the use of force in our region. Our country is committed to multilateralism as a basic principle of negotiations on disarmament and arms control. We also stress the importance of regional and subregional initiatives in this area. In this context, we emphasize that the declaration of Latin America and the Caribbean as a zone of peace reaffirms the commitment of the States of the region to continue promoting nuclear disarmament as a priority objective and contributing to general and complete disarmament in order to encourage confidence-building among nations.

Regional disarmament efforts in the field of disarmament must take due account of the particular characteristics of each region. There can be no imposed formulas or actions that endanger the security of any State in the region concerned. Global and regional approaches to disarmament and security and confidence-building measures complement each other, and, to the extent possible, they should be applied simultaneously.

The implementation of regional confidence-building measures with the consent and participation of all the States in the region concerned helps to avoid conflicts and prevent the unwanted and accidental outbreak of hostilities. States with greater military capacity have an important responsibility for regional and international security. In this context, it is essential to guarantee respect for regional and subregional decisions, agreements and treaties aimed at achieving peace and security.

Nuclear-weapon-free zones make an effective contribution to the strengthening of regional and global peace and security and must be respected. In the framework of the fiftieth anniversary of the adoption of the Treaty of Tlatelolco, which established the first nuclear-weapon-free zone in a densely populated area, we recognize the important contribution of nuclear-weapon-free zones, and we reiterate Cuba's unfailing support for the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East. We believe that there is no justification for the failure to comply with the agreement on holding an international conference on the establishment in the Middle East of a zone free of nuclear weapons and

other weapons of mass destruction, which would be a milestone in the peace process in the Middle East region.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize the importance that Cuba attaches to the work of the United Nations Regional Centres for Peace and Disarmament, including the Regional Centre for Latin America and the Caribbean. In our view, their current resources are limited and insufficient. We hope that the role of these Centres may continue to be strengthened to the benefit of disarmament, security and development at the regional level.

Mr. Redha (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to take this opportunity to express my delegation's support for the statements made by the representatives of Yemen and Indonesia on behalf of the Group of Arab States and the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, respectively (see A/C.1/72/PV.20).

My delegation reaffirms the importance of nuclear-weapon-free zones as a cornerstone of confidence-building measures at the regional level that can contribute to promoting non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and strengthening the non-proliferation regime. We believe that the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones promotes nuclear disarmament, maintains the security of the countries concerned and brings us closer to the lofty objective of achieving and maintaining international and regional peace and security. In this regard, Iraq fully supports the establishment of such zones with a view to achieving the desired objective of establishing a world free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction.

The sensitive and serious developments experienced in the international arena in general, and the Middle East in particular, impose a collective responsibility on the international community and demand resolute efforts to establish a zone in the Middle East free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. While we are disappointed at the failure to achieve consensus on the final document of the 2015 Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), we affirm the importance of the essential role played by the United Nations and the three States depositaries of the NPT in convening a conference on the establishment of the nuclear-weapon-free zone as soon as possible, on the basis of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East and the decision of the 2010 NPT Review Conference.

Failure to implement the Middle East resolution will undoubtedly lead to continuing instability and tension in the region, and further complicate the problems related to the universality of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, which would expose the non-proliferation regime to challenges and threats that would adversely affect the credibility and the universality of the Treaty.

Finally, Iraq believes that the nuclear disarmament of Israel, its accession to the NPT as a non-nuclear party and the placement of all its nuclear facilities under the comprehensive safeguards system of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) are fundamental and necessary conditions for establishing a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East, in accordance with Security Council resolution 487 (1981). Such steps represent a necessary prelude that could contribute to easing the tension in the Middle East, a region that is insecure because of the failure to verify the potential of the capabilities and purposes of Israel's military facilities while the facilities of all other parties in the region are under the IAEA safeguards system.

The Chair: I give the floor to the representative of Algeria to introduce draft resolution A/C.1/72/L.8.

Mr. Ait Abdeslam (Algeria): Algeria fully associates itself with the statements made by the representatives of Indonesia, on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, and Yemen, on behalf of the Group of Arab States (see A/C.1/72/PV.20).

Given the importance of the regional disarmament and security agenda, my delegation would like to take the opportunity presented by this thematic debate to make the following comments.

Algeria remains committed to the promotion of regional and international peace and security as a permanent feature of its foreign policy and as a cardinal principle around which its action is guided in the international arena. Bearing that commitment in mind, Algeria has always advocated dialogue, cooperation and solidarity within the traditional frameworks and settings of its memberships, in particular in Africa and the Mediterranean region. In that regard, Algeria welcomed the entry into force in 2009 of the Pelindaba Treaty, which represents an important contribution to the strengthening of peace and security both regionally and internationally. However, we remain deeply concerned that such a zone has not also been granted to

the Middle East region and reiterate the importance of accelerating its establishment without any further delay.

Faced with a deteriorating security situation of its immediate surroundings, Algeria alerted the international community about the risks associated with the unregulated and uncontrolled proliferation of all types of conventional weapons in the North Africa and Sahel regions and their close links with terrorists groups, transnational organized crime, drug trafficking and smuggling networks. That challenging situation is very worrying and represents a serious threat to the peace, security, stability and sustainable development of all countries in those regions, as well as in the Mediterranean region. It also has devastating humanitarian and socioeconomic consequences.

Given the magnitude of those consequences, Algeria strongly believes that ensuring technical and financial assistance from developed countries, the United Nations and international organizations would contribute to strengthening the capacities of the Sahel countries to fight the illicit trade in conventional weapons and therefore to dismantling organized arms-trafficking networks and terrorist groups.

Algeria spares no effort in consolidating stability and security beyond its borders. With regard to the crisis in Libya, we remain totally convinced that the only solution to that issue, which is so critical to the security, peace and stability within the region and beyond, is through dialogue and national reconciliation among our Libyan brothers and neighbours. The international community's duty is to bring all possible political and diplomatic means to bear in supporting, encouraging and promoting a national and inclusive solution for Libya.

Regarding the situation in Mali, the inter-Malian dialogue process initiated by Algeria resulted in the comprehensive Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali between the Government and other Malian parties. Fully committed to ensuring its implementation, my country is still playing a key role in that regard by chairing the Agreement Monitoring Committee, and we encourage the international community to continue its very much needed support, whether political or financial.

I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate Algeria's commitment to supporting our brother peoples of Libya and Mali and to working with other

neighbouring countries for a better future for all the peoples in the region and beyond.

The Algerian delegation welcomes the Secretary-General's report on strengthening security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region (A/72/320), which contains the views of some Member States concerning ways and means to strengthen security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region. I want to take this opportunity to thank those Member States that have contributed to the implementation of General Assembly resolution 71/85.

In accordance with the Mediterranean policy based on the principles of cooperation, friendship, good-neighbourliness and mutual respect, Algeria has the honour, as in previous years, to introduce the draft resolution entitled "Strengthening of security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region" (A/C.1/72/L.8), under agenda item 104, for consideration by the First Committee and the General Assembly at its the seventy-second session. The Algerian delegation and the other sponsors are relying on the support of all Member States for ensuring that this text is adopted by consensus.

Ms. Oweida (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): The delegation of the United Arab Emirates associates itself with the statements made on behalf of the Group of Arab States and the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/72/PV.20).

The United Arab Emirates reaffirms its commitment to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and emphasizes the right of States to develop nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. The United Arab Emirates is considered an example in its region of a State that uses energy for peaceful purposes. The United Arab Emirates also attaches importance to the establishment of a world free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction.

Despite the existence of nuclear-weapon-free zones in our world and the importance of the bases and principles developed by the NPT to counter nuclear proliferation, there are still obstacles that must be overcome to achieve the total elimination of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction.

In that context, my country affirms its continued commitment to supporting dialogue, consultation and all efforts aimed at establishing a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in the

Middle East. We also hope that positive and serious steps will be taken to implement the mechanisms and outcome of the 2010 NPT Review Conference and to ensure that the postponed conference on the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East is held with the participation of all countries in the region. In this regard, my country once again calls on Israel to accede to the Treaty. It is the only State in the region that has not yet done so.

In this connection, the United Arab Emirates reaffirms the importance of Iran's adherence and full commitment to the provisions of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. Its nuclear and missile activities continue to be a source of concern and to undermine security and stability in the region. My country also hopes that the implementation of the provisions of the Iranian nuclear agreement and the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action will be reflected in Iran's behaviour in the region. My country supports international efforts in this regard, including the strategy announced by the United States to put an end to Iranian activities that undermine security and stability in the region. The United Arab Emirates reiterates that Iran's compliance with the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action and its full and transparent implementation are essential to building confidence and credibility regarding Iran's nuclear activities.

In conclusion, we call on the international community to make further efforts to reach a consensus on developing the work of this Committee and adopting effective measures that contribute to the promotion of regional and international peace and security.

The Chair: I give the floor to the representative of Peru to introduce draft resolution A/C.1/72/L.51.

Mr. Prieto (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): Peru associates itself with the statement made by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/72/PV.20).

Latin America and the Caribbean is fundamentally a middle-income region that has made significant progress in reducing poverty. However, we are still seeing persistent challenges, such as inequality and extreme poverty, in addition to problems of violence and insecurity. To address those challenges, Governments need technical tools and economic resources. A good part of those resources are lost thanks to the

negative effects of armed violence and heavy spending on armaments.

Tackling that situation requires coordinated efforts to advance activities to implement peace, confidence-building and disarmament measures, together with actions to promote economic and social development. That is why the General Assembly mandated the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean to provide substantive support to State initiatives and activities in the region aimed at implementing peace and disarmament measures and at promoting economic and social development.

Thanks to the support provided by the Regional Centre, the States of Latin America and the Caribbean have made progress in capacity-building, training specialized personnel and developing and implementing standards in areas related to disarmament and security. In that context, this year the Regional Centre organized more than 60 technical, legal and training assistance events to support initiatives of States of the region aimed at implementing the instruments related to conventional weapons and weapons of mass destruction.

In the context of the implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and the International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons, the Regional Centre provided technical training to more than 600 officials of national authorities on the marking, tracing, stockpile management and destruction of small arms.

With regard to the participation of the private sector in the security services in Latin America and the Caribbean, the Regional Centre continued its project for strengthening the capacity of Governments to control small arms owned by private security companies. In the context of that project, it assisted in the destruction of more than 450 small arms and supported the secondary marking of more than 500 weapons owned by private security companies, in addition to training approximately 250 Government officials and employees of those companies.

In the case of Peru, the Regional Centre launched a new project to encourage young people to participate in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. As part of that project, the Centre worked

with 800 adolescents in the city of Trujillo, in northern Peru, to raise their awareness of the danger of firearms. Peru's National Authority for the Oversight of Security Services, Firearms, Ammunition and Explosives for Civilian Use, in cooperation with the Regional Centre, destroyed nearly 10,000 weapons and underscored Peru's ongoing initiatives to rid vulnerable communities of confiscated weapons and to reduce their risk of being diverted or misused.

Identifying the areas on which the Regional Centre should focus its work is an essential task carried out with good judgment by the various administrations running the Centre, particularly the current one, which is responsible for planning and executing its activities in both Lima and New York. We very much appreciate them all.

Lastly, for the reasons I have mentioned, my delegation once again has the honour to introduce the draft resolution entitled "United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean" (A/C.1/72/L.51), which will be submitted for the consideration of the General Assembly. As in previous years, we trust that we can rely on the valuable support of delegations so that it can be adopted by consensus.

Mr. Petchezi (Togo) (*spoke in French*): Togo is taking the floor this afternoon in its capacity as host country of the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa (UNREC).

We would first like to thank the Secretary-General for his report (A/72/97), which provides important information on the Centre's work. The many actions perfectly illustrate the fact that UNREC is carrying out its mission well. It is always important to remember the significant role played by UNREC, particularly in the context of Africa, where the possession and illicit circulation of weapons of all kinds by non-State actors pose huge security challenges for our States.

In accordance with its mandate, outlined in resolution 40/151 G, UNREC has continued to make encouraging efforts in the area of regional disarmament. Last year, as usual, at the request of African States, it provided technical support to their initiatives to implement critical measures relating to peace and arms control. Among other examples, we can cite support for the African Union Commission in the implementation of its Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, particularly towards the goal of silencing

the guns by 2020 and reducing violence in all its forms all over the world. UNREC has also made an outstanding contribution to the implementation of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel through the provision of technical assistance in improving the fight against the illicit circulation of small arms.

With regard to Togo, UNREC's flagship action has clearly been its technical support for the marking and registration of weapons. A training course on international norms for the control of small arms and on the related evaluation tool was organized in Lomé in November 2016 for officials in the department in charge of security.

In addition, the Regional Centre actively participated in the work of the African Union Extraordinary Summit on Maritime Security, Safety and Development in Africa, held in Lomé in October 2016. UNREC contributed to the emerging debate on enhancing maritime security in Africa by developing a document that reviews the challenges and the international instruments related to maritime safety on the continent, including the relevant conceptual definitions. We are grateful to UNREC for its ongoing commitment to supporting African countries.

Despite those efforts by UNREC in the context of regional disarmament, it still faces a financial challenge. Togo echoes the Secretary-General's appeal to Member States and contributors to make greater efforts to enable it to strengthen its operational capabilities in order to meet our countries' ever-increasing needs. That is why we call on Member States to adopt by consensus draft resolution A/C.1/72/L.39, submitted by Nigeria on behalf of the African countries, which, while recalling the central role of UNREC in regional disarmament, urges States to honour their pledges to enable it to carry out its activities.

As host country, Togo would like to take this opportunity to reiterate its support for the Centre. This is the place to congratulate Togo's Government on its ongoing efforts to provide the Centre with appropriate working conditions, including its real-estate infrastructure.

In conclusion, the Government of Togo welcomes the appointment of Mr. Anselme Yabouri as the new Director of the Centre. We are convinced that he will enable UNREC to strengthen its assistance to our States in the area of disarmament in order to meet the

security challenges of the African subregion and ensure the development and well-being of our peoples.

Mr. Coussière (France) (*spoke in French*): The regional dimension of the work of the First Committee is very important to my delegation. Among former adversaries that are forced to get to know each other in order to build a neighbourhood of peace at the regional level, ambitious best practices can crystallize, that are likely to inspire the work we are doing in disarmament conventions.

The European Union (EU) is the best example of that. It has succeeded in drawing lessons from a painful past to build a lasting peace by inventing a new mode of governing differences — unity in diversity. Through its neighbourhood policy and its cooperation with third countries, the EU uses that experience to the benefit of its partners. The cooperation tools it proposes, particularly in the field of disarmament, have a strong focus on the regional dimension. For example, France is actively participating in the European Union's assistance programme designed to promote the entry into force, rapid universalization and effective implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty. For the time being, that involves Senegal, Burkina Faso, Sierra Leone and the Philippines.

In addition, by becoming actively involved in the growing strength of the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel, France is encouraging those States — Chad, the Niger, Burkina Faso, Mali and Mauritania — to strengthen their military presence in border areas by improving their coordination through a single chain of command. The effectiveness of that mode of action has been proven in the fight against terrorism, but also in efforts to limit the major problem of cross-border trafficking, particularly in arms, ammunition or explosives. One of the priorities of the contributors supporting the creation of the Joint Force will also be providing it with the capacity to combat improvised explosive devices, which cause significant losses among civilian populations as well as in the region's national and multinational armed forces.

At the European level, France, like the other EU member States, strongly supports the establishment of transparency and confidence-building measures adapted to the geostrategic situation of the region. The Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe has resulted in the destruction of a great deal of equipment, and my country is resolved not to see it wither away and

calls for a return to its full implementation. With regard to the Treaty on Open Skies, we urge States parties to make good-faith efforts to seek solutions to their current differences within the Treaty's Consultative Commission. With respect to the Vienna Document, my delegation also wants to work on strengthening and updating it with all the countries concerned in order to adapt it to developments in military doctrines and equipment.

Other instruments that have garnered consensus within the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) include agreements on combating the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, cross-cutting threats, cybersecurity and the management of small arms and light weapons and ammunition stockpiles. They are being closely studied by the OSCE's Mediterranean or Asian partners as good practices adaptable to their specific regional environment.

Non-proliferation and disarmament initiatives at the global, regional and subregional levels can be mutually reinforcing when they are designed to be complementary. The mobilization of the international community against the threat posed by the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons is a good example. At the global level, the United Nations Programme of Action against the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects provides a general framework for combating trafficking in small arms and light weapons and strongly encourages cooperation at all levels. France will preside over the third Review Conference on the Programme of Action in 2018 and is fully committed to making it a success.

At the regional level cooperation is essential, given the largely cross-border nature of trafficking in small arms and light weapons. Among the initiatives in which France participates are the review of the European Union strategy on combating illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons and the OSCE effort to encourage good practices, assistance and cooperation in this area.

At the subregional level, France supports the Post-Conflict Demining and Decontamination Training Centre in Ouidah, Benin, which has a regional reach and supports our African partners in strengthening their capacity to assess, upgrade and manage small arms and light weapons and ammunition stockpiles. Those scalable projects, which can be replicated in other countries in similar situations, aim to strengthen

national institutional and operational capacities rather than replace them.

Mr. Alfassam (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to note that the delegation of the State of Kuwait aligns itself with the statements made by the representatives of Yemen, on behalf of the Group of Arab States, and Indonesia, on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/72/PV.20).

Today we are discussing topics related to the treaties on establishing zones free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, under the umbrella of regional disarmament. The creation of such zones is one of the most essential elements for ridding the world of these lethal weapons and achieving the objectives of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).

The State of Kuwait underscores its principled and firm position on disarmament and international security. We must remember what we have experienced together with a view to achieving our shared goal of a world without nuclear weapons.

More than 22 years have passed since the NPT was indefinitely extended in 1995. Since then, the State of Kuwait, together with the other Arab States, has participated in 13 meetings of the various preparatory committees for the Review Conferences of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, in addition to three review conferences and 22 sessions of the First Committee on disarmament and international security. However, despite all of that and the efforts made, we are still discussing something that we agreed to in 1995 — the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East.

When I look out at this conference room, I see many friends and colleagues who know how close we were in 2010 to achieving certain goals meeting the aspirations of our peoples, with the adoption at that Review Conference of an action plan that called for the holding of a conference on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, among other things. However, and unfortunately, all those efforts were at naught when Israel blocked the convening of such a conference. The State of Kuwait categorically rejects all Israel's attempts to prevent the holding of a conference on establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East.

When we talk about regional disarmament, particularly in the Middle East, it is inevitable that we express our concerns about Israel's refusal to accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and to sign the comprehensive safeguards agreement of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). In doing this, Israel avoids having to disclose the number of its nuclear facilities or even to allow the IAEA to examine those facilities, some of which are undoubtedly dilapidated and constitute a security, humanitarian and ecological concern for the whole world. Along with the rest of the international community, we have warned that nuclear incidents do not recognize national borders, while their effects can be felt all over the world, and past experiences amply demonstrate this fact.

In conclusion, Kuwait underscores that it will pursue its efforts to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. Through the First Committee, we call again on the three States that sponsored the Middle East resolution adopted at the 1995 Review Conference, which is an integral part of the indefinite extension of the NPT, to take responsibility for implementing it. Those three sponsors of the resolution are very familiar with the unflagging efforts that Kuwait and the Arab States have made, their many concessions and the significant diplomatic flexibility they have shown over the past seven years with regard to convening the postponed Helsinki conference.

We look forward to seeing the three sponsoring States play a pivotal role in order to find an appropriate way to create a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East based on the terms of reference pertaining to the 1995, 2000 and 2010 Review Conferences. We hope that they will make greater efforts to create a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, in accordance with the Review Conferences' conclusions.

Mr. Aung (Myanmar): Myanmar aligns itself with the statements delivered by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (NAM) and by the representative of Malaysia on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (see A/C.1/72/PV.20).

The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction today poses a threat to regional and international peace and security. In addition to security concerns, we are also alarmed by the wide range of humanitarian and socioeconomic consequences of that proliferation.

Regional security and stability are prerequisites, particularly for developing countries, as security, stability and development go hand in hand. Regional disarmament approaches play a pivotal role in the implementation of global disarmament and non-proliferation instruments through national capacity-building and outreach and advocacy initiatives. Transparency and confidence-building measures among the countries of a region are also key to preventing the escalation of tensions in that region.

My delegation would like to express its appreciation to the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA), its Regional Disarmament Branch and the three United Nations Regional Centres for their invaluable contributions to global disarmament, international peace and security. Myanmar fully supports the role played by the three United Nations Regional Centres, particularly the Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific, through its assistance to Member States in the region. It focuses on practical assistance and capacity-building in order to contribute to national and regional efforts for arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation, and to promote dialogue, confidence-building and peace and disarmament education in the region.

In recognition of the Centre's contributions, Myanmar, together with NAM members, always supports and sponsors the annual draft resolution entitled "United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific", and we will do the same this year.

Let me briefly touch on Myanmar's regional disarmament efforts. Myanmar organized a national round table on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004), in cooperation with UNODA, in January 2016. All stakeholders exchanged views on good practices in the implementation of the resolution to counter the spread of weapons of mass destruction to non-State actors. Furthermore, in February 2016 the Regional Centre organized a capacity-building workshop on small arms and light weapons in Myanmar, on formulating international instruments and domestic legislation and on available tools for the control of small arms and light weapons.

Myanmar strongly supports the establishment of regional nuclear-weapon-free zones, which have contributed significantly to strengthening global nuclear disarmament. We welcome the successful

conclusion of the nuclear negotiations between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the E3/EU+3 that resulted in the finalization of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action on 14 July 2015. We firmly believe that the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone strengthens global nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament norms and consolidates international efforts to achieve peace and security. In that context, Myanmar reaffirms its commitment to engaging nuclear-weapon States and intensifying the ongoing efforts of all parties to resolves all outstanding issues, in accordance with the objectives and principles of the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty.

Regional disarmament plays an important role in the global disarmament regime, which is the main driving force for the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free world. We therefore call on all Member States to make their best efforts for confidence-building measures, including transparency and cooperation, to promote regional and global disarmament, peace and security.

Mr. Jabrayilov (Azerbaijan): Azerbaijan aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/72/PV.20). I would also like to make a national statement on some issues that are important to my country.

Conventional arms-control regimes are important instruments for ensuring stability, predictability and transparency in the military arena. As a complex political-military arrangement, any conventional arms-control regime requires a high degree of commitment to its underlying principles by States parties, as well as respect for the norms and principles of international law, which constitutes the basic foundation of any arms-control regime.

Azerbaijan has not ratified the 1992 Tashkent Agreement on the Principles and Procedures for the Implementation of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE Treaty). Nevertheless, we have been voluntarily applying and observing all the provisions of the CFE Treaty and promoting transparency by participating in regular informal exchanges of information and receiving inspections.

Confidence-building measures are valuable tools for fostering mutual trust among States. They should be implemented in a manner that ensures the right of each State to equal security, guaranteeing that no individual State or group of States obtains advantages over others.

confidence-building measures cannot be taken out of the overall political and security context, particularly when conflict zones fall within their area of application.

As a participating State of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), Azerbaijan regularly engages in information-sharing, submits reports and receives on-site inspections and evaluation and observation visits under the OSCE's 2011 Vienna Document on Confidence- and Security-Building Measures and its Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security, Document on Small Arms and Light Weapons and Principles Governing Conventional Arms Transfers, among others.

Azerbaijan attaches utmost importance to the full implementation of 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 the main international framework to prevent, combat and eradicate that trade, as well as to the 2005 International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons. At the regional level, we stress the relevance of the OSCE Document on Small Arms and Light Weapons and its important contribution to tackling this problem in the OSCE area.

Efforts to ensure the implementation of arms control, disarmament and CBM mechanisms in the South Caucasus are being seriously hampered by Armenia's continued aggression against Azerbaijan. My country is in a state of war, which it did not start but is working very hard to end. Azerbaijan is constructively engaged at all levels to restore its territorial integrity on the basis of the generally accepted norms and principles of international law, the Charter of the United Nations and the relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions.

Armenia's occupation of Azerbaijan's internationally recognized territories has been a major obstacle to the full implementation of the CFE Treaty in the South Caucasus region. Armenia flagrantly violates the fundamental principles of the CFE Treaty on the non-use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of States and on host-nation consent. It is also continuing its military build-up in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan. Armenia's overall number of declared and undeclared Treaty-limited pieces of equipment stationed within its own territory and in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan far exceeds

its ceiling permitted under the CFE Treaty. Against that backdrop, it still continues to misinform the United Nations community by deliberately providing false information about its military holdings and activities within existing data-exchange mechanisms.

Azerbaijan has repeatedly drawn the attention of the international community to Armenia's illegal transfers of small arms and light weapons and other conventional weapons to the occupied territories of my country. We urge all States to refrain from, condemn and prevent such illegal activities, which violate the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Azerbaijan and thwart the prospects for peace in our region.

The Chair: I give the floor to the representative of Nepal to introduce draft resolution A/C.1/72/L.48.

Mr. Thapa (Nepal): Nepal associates itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/72/PV.20).

Nepal appreciates the report of the Secretary-General (A/72/98) on the activities undertaken by the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific (UNRCPD). We also thank the Directors of the Regional Centres for their comprehensive briefings. We believe that the regional and global approaches to disarmament and non-proliferation complement each other and should be pursued simultaneously to promote regional and international peace and security. In that belief, Nepal has strongly advocated for the important role of regional disarmament in maintaining international peace and security.

To complement the formal tracks of disarmament, my delegation encourages the Regional Centres in their role as drivers promoting partnerships with women, youth, civil society, academia and the private sector for developing innovative confidence-building measures. Experience has shown that those stakeholders can play critical roles in preventing conflict among countries with competing and conflicting military aspirations. The Regional Centres can also serve as repositories for best practices.

Nepal believes that education on disarmament helps to change the basic attitudes of people and policymakers to issues of peace and security and supports the purposes and principles of the United Nations. The Regional Centres should therefore disseminate information and

develop educational models for different age groups to enhance their level of awareness. They should also share lessons learned among themselves in order to reproduce them in their own geographical contexts.

In that regard, the Regional Centres should be strengthened and given the resources they need to fulfil their mandates. My delegation is grateful to all Member States and their partners for their continued cooperation. In particular, we commend the signing yesterday of the agreement between the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs and the Chairman of Risssho Koseikai on supporting disarmament and non-proliferation education activities.

With the support of UNRCPD, the Government of Nepal has developed textbook content on peace and disarmament education for students in the eighth to tenth grades, as well as optional courses for the sixth to eighth grades. Since the late 1980s, in partnership with UNRCPD, Nepal has organized regional meetings and dialogues under the Kathmandu process with the aim of encouraging enhanced openness, transparency and confidence-building measures in the Asia-Pacific region. Last year in Kathmandu, with the support of UNRCPD, Nepal organized a high-level round table on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004). We want to reaffirm the importance of such regional dialogues, including for fostering understanding, cooperation and confidence-building in the field of peace and disarmament in the region and beyond.

We acknowledge the contribution of UNRCPD towards achieving Sustainable Development Goal 16, as well as in encouraging the participation of women in its disarmament and non-proliferation activities. We appreciate its support to Member States for their capacity-building and implementation of programmes of action in the areas of disarmament and non-proliferation and encourage Member States of the region to identify their areas of interest in working with the Centre to promote disarmament and non-proliferation in the region.

Nepal echoes the call of the Secretary-General on non-governmental organizations and countries in the region and beyond to make voluntary contributions to the Regional Centre to ensure the sustainability of its activities and operations in order to enable it to fulfil its mandate.

As the host country of UNRCPD, Nepal is introducing the draft resolution on UNRCPD, contained

in document A/C.1/72/L.48, for consideration by the First Committee. We are confident that, as in previous years, we will have the valuable support of all delegations for the wider sponsorship and adoption of the draft resolution by consensus.

Mr. Tsymbaliuk (Ukraine): Ukraine aligns itself with the statement made by the observer of the European Union yesterday (see A/C.1/72/PV.20).

As an advocate of maintaining peace and security with the lowest possible level of armaments, including conventional ones, Ukraine recognizes the important role of conventional arms control, including at the regional and subregional levels, and therefore welcomes all relevant measures in this field. Ukraine's consistent commitment to strengthening the effectiveness of confidence-building measures also remains unchanged.

Taking that into account, Ukraine supports and is a sponsor of two draft resolutions, "Conventional arms control at the regional and subregional levels" (A/C.1/72/L.13/Rev.1) and "Confidence-building measures in the regional and subregional context" (A/C.1/72/L.11), introduced by Pakistan.

Ukraine is a responsible, long-term participant in pan-European confidence-building mechanisms related to conventional arms control, such as the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe, the Treaty on Open Skies and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Vienna Document on Confidence- and Security-Building Measures. Despite the tense situation in some regions of the country and the increased burden on Ukraine's armed forces caused by Russia's military aggression, Ukraine continues to comply with its obligations in the field of conventional arms control under those international instruments.

Ukraine reiterates the great importance that it attaches to bilateral confidence-building measures with neighbouring countries in border areas, developed in accordance with the Vienna Document. To date, we have entered into the relevant bilateral agreements with Poland, Belarus, Hungary, Slovakia and Romania. The conduct of inspections on a parity basis pursuant to those agreements has confirmed their practical value in deepening trust, friendly relations and military and political cooperation between the countries concerned. Their noteworthy features include the observation of military activities, starting at the tactical level; a ban on the conduct of military exercises at or above battalion level within 10 to 20 kilometres of a border;

the applicability of confidence-building measures to the activities not only of armed forces but also of other security, defence and law-enforcement agencies; and the possibility of extending inspections for an additional period of time and expanding them to battalion-level units.

Regrettably, Ukraine's numerous previous proposals to enter into a similar agreement with Russia were rejected by the Russian side. It is also regrettable that the Russian Federation has created the ongoing impasse with regard to subregional military cooperation and confidence-building arrangements among the Black Sea littoral States, in particular the Black Sea Naval Cooperation Task Group and the confidence- and security-building measures in the naval field in the Black Sea, in which Ukraine took part.

Moreover, after suspending its participation in the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe in 2007, Russia avoided information exchange and verification control, especially on the situation in Russia's southern military district. Destabilizing accumulations of personnel and military equipment in that area enabled Russia's military invasion of Georgia in 2008 and its aggression against Ukraine, launched in 2014 and continuing to this day. As a result of that hostile activity, conventional arms control and confidence-building measure regimes do not currently apply to the territory of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, in Ukraine, or to certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine.

Despite the deterioration in the security situation caused by the uncivilized behaviour of the current Kremlin leadership, Ukraine believes that the experience gained in the OSCE area through the development of confidence-building measures deserves proper attention, and the Vienna Document, which has generated a great deal of experience in confidence-building, can serve as a viable example for similar arrangements in other regions of the world.

Mr. Najem (Bahrain) (*spoke in Arabic*): My country's delegation would like to express its support for the statements made earlier by the representatives of Yemen, on behalf of the Group of Arab States, and Indonesia, on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/72/PV.20).

On 11 May 1995, the Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons adopted the

principles and objectives for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. The Review Conference called for universal adherence to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) as a priority, in particular by States possessing nuclear facilities that are not subject to the safeguards of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). In that regard, the Kingdom of Bahrain underscores the importance of the pivotal agreements establishing zones free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction, particularly in the Middle East, which is considered a region full of challenges that demand that we work to establish it as such a zone in order to achieve peace, security and stability in an area that affects the whole world.

The Kingdom of Bahrain would like to emphasize the extreme importance of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty for addressing the catastrophic security, humanitarian and environmental threats that any nuclear explosion presents. It is therefore important to ensure that the Treaty enters into force, and States that have not yet joined and ratified it should do so.

The continued refusal of Israel, the only country in the Middle East that has not yet acceded to the NPT and that refuses to subject its nuclear facilities to the IAEA safeguards, represents an extreme threat in terms of both security and the environment to the States and peoples of the region. The continued delay in fulfilling the international commitment outlined in the 1995 resolution, which calls for the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East, obstructs any possible progress in the efforts to ensure non-proliferation. We therefore look forward to making progress in the negotiations on the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East and thereby ending fears of the serious consequences that the existence of such weapons implies.

Mr. Yermakov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Europe has a special place for us in a regional context, for understandable reasons. It is our shared home, and who if not we should work on the issues of developing an architecture based on equality and indivisible security for all, without artificial divisions?

As a consistent advocate of peace, as far back as 10 years ago Russia proposed replacing the outdated Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in

Europe — which reflects thinking in terms of blocs and their opposition — with a comprehensive treaty on European security. However, our partners on the European continent are still not ready for such constructive efforts. Instead, NATO has accelerated its reckless expansion eastwards by strengthening its military infrastructure near Russia's borders, even deploying elements of the United States global ballistic-missile-defence system. The direct interference of the West in the internal affairs of our neighbours, regime change by anti-constitutional methods, including the use of force, and an insistence on negotiating with us from a position of strength have become normal practice, thereby forfeiting a historic opportunity to improve the situation in Europe. The consequences are familiar to us all.

Despite all this negativity, we believe that there can be no alternative to a political and diplomatic solution to all the accumulated issues. We therefore supported the initiative to launch a structured dialogue on European security issues within the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), a format that could contribute to easing tensions and restoring mutual trust. We should begin with the basics and put aside any unsubstantiated accusations and belligerent rhetoric. Launching a depoliticized dialogue on a basis of equal rights would prepare the ground for including military experts from both sides in the process. Their participation would make it possible to start considering existing concerns, discussing measures for preventing dangerous military incidents and from there to begin formulating concrete de-escalation measures, above all in the area of direct contact between Russia and NATO.

The initial discussions in the context of that structured dialogue provide some hope. We have seen positive signs from the European experts during their meetings with representatives of defence ministries, in their gradual shift away from unfounded accusations against Russia and apparent willingness to interact. It will be important to strengthen that trend towards normalizing relations, including in the military arena, through joint efforts. The OSCE Forum for Security Cooperation could be an ideal platform for promoting dialogue. However, its potential is still weakened by the unilateral actions of NATO, which has broken off military cooperation with Russia. The attempts of some countries to continue anti-Russian rhetoric at any cost are not helping to restore a collaborative environment. During our chairmanship of the OSCE

Forum from April to August, we did our best to contribute to normalizing the situation. Our delegation focused on issues of common interest to all States, such as combating the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, arms export controls, the exchange of experience on conventional munitions disposal and the implementation of bilateral agreements on the prevention of incidents in the air and at sea.

There are still a couple of very important issues that I would like to address in my statement, so I beg the Committee's indulgence.

The Treaty on Open Skies remains an important confidence-building measure. However, following the coup d'état in Kyiv, some completely unfounded accusations were made against Russia with regard to the alleged build-up of armed forces near its border with Ukraine. In a demonstration of unprecedented transparency, we offered all interested States parties to the Treaty on Open Skies the opportunity of conducting nearly 20 observation flights in the area. In March 2014, at the request of the Kyiv authorities, Russia permitted an additional extraordinary observation mission. The observation flights clearly showed that none of the allegations against Russia had any basis in fact. For some reason, however, the decoded photographs, especially from the flight mission conducted by Ukraine, have not been publicized. It seems that our Western partners prefer to stay silent on the issue. Since the unjustified accusations against Russia continued, we organized a presentation on the results of our decoded copies of the photographs on the margins of the Forum in Vienna. The photographs were compared with similar materials obtained a year earlier and provided a factual rebuttal of all the Western allegations.

In conclusion, yet another shameful attempt at stirring up anti-Russian hysteria therefore failed miserably. We regret that our Western partners behave like unreasonable children and continue their witch hunt while real threats from a quite different side have long and obstinately been knocking at the door of their fragile house.

Mrs. Imnadze (Georgia): Georgia aligns itself with the statement made previously by the observer of the European Union (EU) (see A/C.1/72/PV.20). I would like to make some brief remarks in my national capacity.

Georgia would like to express its gratitude to the European Union for its valuable financial contribution to the ongoing demilitarization project for the disposal

of 461 tons of surplus ammunition in my country, implemented by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), as was mentioned in yesterday's EU statement. In view of the responsibility due to our commitment 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 and the OSCE Document on Small Arms and Light Weapons, we have been fully participating in the relevant information-exchange mechanisms and have already made substantial progress in improving our control of small arms and light weapons over the past few years.

At the same time, I should also further clarify that illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons, and their excessive accumulation, remain issues of concern in the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia/Tskhinvali, which are currently under illegal foreign military occupation. In fact, quite apart from the issue of small arms and light weapons, both those regions — where as many as 6,000 armed forces and Russian Federation Federal Security Service personnel are deployed — are heavily militarized, with a variety of sophisticated offensive weaponry. The force structures and positions of such deployments go beyond any defensive goals, hinder efforts to resolve the conflict peacefully and seek to destabilize the region.

Mr. Al Habib (Islamic Republic of Iran): The Middle East continues to be one of the most volatile regions in the world. Despite all the new sources of insecurity that have appeared, the first, oldest and most persistent threat to the security of the Middle East still originates in the Israeli regime's expansionist and interventionist strategies, aggressive and warmongering policies and offensive and brutal practices. It is the only country in the region with nuclear weapons and unsafeguarded nuclear facilities and activities, while it continues to brazenly reject the international calls to join the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. Its nuclear weapons are the main obstacle to the long-standing international demand for the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. In addition, Israel possesses other weapons of mass destruction and stubbornly rejects international calls to become a party to the international instruments banning such weapons.

The fact that the combined total military expenditure of the Middle East countries for 2016 showed a 19 per cent increase over that of 2007, and that

approximately 25 per cent of the global arms trade is destined for the Middle East, indicates just how serious and alarming the increasing military expenditure in the Middle East is. Apart from the Israeli regime's large military expenditures, the situation is also due to the huge increase in the military spending of two of the States in the Persian Gulf, which, together with Israel, were among the 15 countries with the highest military expenditures in the world in 2016. For example, a surge in arms purchases by a certain oil-rich Gulf State helped to increase global arms sales by more than 10 per cent in 2015 and put that country at the top of the list of the largest arms-importing countries in the world. In 2017, that country signed a \$110 billion arms deal with the United States, in addition to the 10-year \$350 billion arms deal that it had previously signed separately with the same country. That country has increased its military spending year on year since 2002.

The next example is another oil-rich Gulf State, the world's third-largest arms-importing country between 2012 and 2016. That country, with a smaller population, has developed an assertive and aggressive foreign policy over the years, pursuing a show-of-force policy by intervening militarily in various countries and even establishing a military base in Africa. On average, it has been the fifth-largest arms importer in the world over the past 20 years and it is the destination of 19 per cent of all United States arms exports. In recent years, those two oil-rich Persian Gulf States have used many of their weapons to deal death and destruction in Yemen.

In order to restore security and stability in the region, it will be crucial to eliminate Israel's nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction and ensure its accession to the various relevant multilateral international instruments, including for the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. A sharp decrease in the military expenditures and arms imports of Israel and certain Persian Gulf States is also essential.

The full version of our statement will be available on the PaperSmart portal.

The Chair: We have now heard the last speaker in the cluster on regional disarmament and security.

I shall now call on those who have requested the right of reply. In that connection, I would like to remind all delegations that the first intervention is limited to 10 minutes and the second to five minutes.

Mr. Hallak (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): The speakers for the European Union (EU) continue to feature lies and hypocrisy in their statements. As we have mentioned before, they falsely accuse anyone who does not follow their line. In her statement under the agenda item that the Committee is currently considering (see A/C.1/72/PV.20), the observer of the European Union tried to insult the intelligence of those present here in a desperate attempt to conceal numerous EU member States' involvement in the terrorist war against my country.

Her words are part of the position and policies of NATO and the EU, which are focused on destroying my country's infrastructure and supporting armed terrorist groups with every kind of direct and indirect assistance, in addition to attacking the bases of the Syrian Arab Army and its allies fighting the terrorists, besides murdering thousands of civilians in Syria. They have even destroyed schools for the deaf and mute in Raqqa and other cities.

We are surprised at some of the remarks in the statement of the observer of the European Union. Many of the EU member States have provided armed terrorist organizations, particularly the two terrorist organizations Da'esh and the Al-Nusra Front and their affiliated terrorist groups, with all kinds of weapons, munitions, equipment, experience and intelligence, in addition to providing those terrorist groups with toxic chemical materials to use in my country. The airports of some EU member States have become important and essential supply centres for the terrorist organizations operating on the territories of the Syrian Arab Republic, by providing them with weapons, munitions and equipment. Numerous EU members also sell and smuggle weapons to the armed terrorist organizations operating in our region.

Finally, the EU observer said that the ongoing war in Syria has caused unacceptable suffering for millions of Syrians. We say to her that numerous European countries, particularly EU members, including permanent members of the Security Council, are totally involved in the terrorist war against my country Syria. Everyone knows that they have been supporting it with every possible means and are responsible for the suffering of millions of Syrian citizens. I would like to remind her that the EU's unilateral coercive measures against my country are the main reason for the suffering of the millions about whom she spoke so rudely.

Mr. Pye Soe Aung (Myanmar): I am taking the floor in response to the statement by my colleague from the delegation of Bangladesh.

Our deliberations here should be objective, constructive and helpful in finding solutions to our common challenges. The humanitarian situation at the border has nothing to do with the armaments and disarmament issues that we strive to address in the work of the Committee. I would like to inform the Committee that the Government of Myanmar is deploying all possible means and resources to address the humanitarian situation at the border. The work of the Union Enterprise for Humanitarian Assistance, Resettlement and Development in Rakhine is in progress. We will continue to work with our neighbours and regional and international partners in good faith to address the humanitarian issue at the border.

Mr. Margaryan (Armenia): I am taking the floor to reply to the statement by the Azerbaijani delegation, in which some accusations were made about Armenia. Typically, the Azerbaijani delegation is once again portraying reality upside down in an attempt to deceive the international community, whether with regard to the conflict in Nagorno Karabakh or to issues related to disarmament and regional security. The Azerbaijani representative spoke about the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and its activities within the Organization, somehow omitting the importance of adhering to the agreements reached under the OSCE Minsk Group chairship, which is the only body internationally mandated to mediate the Nagorno Karabakh conflict. With regard to the resolution of that Nagorno Karabakh conflict, Azerbaijan failed to mention the principles of peoples' equal rights and right to self-determination, which among others constitute the essence of the proposals put forward by the co-Chair mediation, which Azerbaijan continues to ignore.

The systematic use of heavy weaponry and artillery missiles makes it unambiguously clear to the international community why the Azerbaijani leadership rejects the establishment of any mechanism to investigate the ceasefire violations on the border. The Azerbaijani representative mentioned confidence-building measures, somehow again failing to give a reasonable explanation as to why Azerbaijan continues to reject the establishment of any confidence-building measures between it and Nagorno Karabakh. Against the backdrop of the hostilities on

the border of Nagorno Karabakh, it is unacceptable to allow Azerbaijan to continue with its current practice of regular violations of the ceasefire. We call on Azerbaijan to renounce violence and commit to implementing the proposals aimed at a peaceful resolution of the conflict. The people of Nagorno Karabakh exercised their right to self-determination more than 25 years ago, and an entire generation has been raised free from foreign domination.

The Republic of Armenia will continue its efforts to achieve a peaceful settlement of the conflict together with the co-Chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group, which remains the only format mandated to mediate the resolution of the conflict.

Mr. Yermakov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We continue to hear strange accusations to the effect that Russia is allegedly not fulfilling the Minsk agreements on the settlement of the civil war in Ukraine. We get the impression that some are simply reading from ancient, much-creased pieces of paper without any understanding of what they are talking about. There are 190 States members here in the First Committee. Let us try to make sense of what this is about.

First, just the facts, with no political judgments. In February 2014, an armed, anti-constitutional coup d'état, supported by the United States and member States of the European Union, took place in Ukraine. All the existing authorities in Ukraine were forcibly removed. Essentially, the former State ceased to exist. A civil war is now going on there. Clearly, the former Ukraine will never return. In order to stop the fratricidal war in Ukraine, comprehensive agreements were signed in Minsk between the current Kyiv authorities and those that did not agree with them, the authorities of the Donbas region. We should point out that the United States has nothing to do with the Minsk agreements, and neither does the European Union as an entity.

There can be only two sorts of people who claim that Russia is not implementing the Minsk agreements. The first group are those gentlemen who have never in fact read the text of the Minsk agreements and are therefore not familiar with it. So when they speak about it here, they are merely empty talking heads. If they had studied the Minsk agreements, they would know that Russia is not a party to the agreements and is not mentioned in them even once. But in the second case, it gets more complicated, and we have to assume that

these so-called gentlemen are deliberately trying to deceive all of us. And as we all understand, neither version makes these gentlemen look honourable. It is regrettable that for the second year in a row now some delegations are publicly stooping so low. Since this unfounded proposition has been raised more than once, let us see what the Minsk agreements actually state so that everyone can understand them once and for all.

The Minsk agreements are a package of measures agreed on 12 February 2015, supported by a declaration of the leaders of Russia, France, Germany and Ukraine. All the documents are freely available. The agreements themselves clearly state that the Kyiv authorities are obliged, first, to end the armed confrontation and remove heavy weapons 50 kilometres from the line of contact. According to the agreement with the Donbas region, they should write a new constitution that would enshrine Donbas's special status, agree on a procedure for holding local elections with Donetsk and Luhansk, enact and implement a total amnesty law and restore full and unconditional physical, political and economic security for every resident of the Donbas area. We all know that Kyiv has not fulfilled a single one of those commitments so far.

As for Russia, it cannot implement the Minsk agreements because none of their provisions has anything directly to do with Russia. There is of course no way that Russia can withdraw troops from Ukrainian territory because it never sent any troops there. If it had, I am sure — and everyone here realizes — that the issue of the internal conflict in Ukraine would have been resolved in a couple of days. Incidentally, that is the view not of Russia but of Western experts, which Committee members can look up. They do not have to quote me on that. It is the opinion of our Western partners.

Apart from that, the representative of Kyiv, who spoke earlier, for some reason made reference to the possibility of some kind of act of aggression by Russia against Georgia. I should point out that it has been a while since our Georgian partners have said anything about that. We get the impression that this is a case of some kind of selective consciousness. It is an unarguable fact that on 8 August 2008, by decree of Georgia's then-President, Mikheil Saakashvili, Georgian troops brutally killed 12 Russian peacebuilders at the line of demarcation with South Ossetia and proceeded to annihilate the civilian population of South Ossetia. Even in that situation, Russia displayed unprecedented

patience, and waited for two days for the great democrats and peacebuilders of the West to stop the massacre in South Ossetia. But nothing happened. Russia was therefore forced to intervene, and we compelled Saakashvili to restore peace. We therefore really fail to understand how this kind of thing can be said about Russia. Incidentally, we all know what happened to Saakashvili later on. In his motherland of Georgia he has been declared a criminal on State charges and is now hiding in Ukraine with the support of our American friends, where he is doing many interesting things.

There are some strange people sitting here behind some country nameplates. Perhaps it is acceptable for people to make fools of one another in their capitals, but this is the United Nations. The rules here are quite different. Respectable people meet here, people who are used to being responsible for every word they utter. What is going on here is frankly disgusting. We are all educated adults, and when people start spewing rubbish that can be publicly refuted on the spot with documents and facts, it is simply shameful.

Mr. Wood (United States of America): I am taking the floor to exercise my right of reply to the comments by my colleague from the Russian Federation. If anything, he is entertaining, but what is interesting is that he started by saying that we need to avoid all of these unfounded accusations and then went on to make a whole series of unfounded accusations. Let me address just a few of them.

First of all, he said that NATO had suspended cooperation with Russia. As many Committee members know, in 2014, NATO suspended all practical cooperation with Russia in response its aggressive actions in Ukraine. We have made it clear that we continue to seek a constructive relationship with Russia, but an improvement in the alliance's relations with Russia will be contingent on a clear and constructive change in Russian reactions, one that demonstrates compliance with international law and Russia's international commitments.

With regard to the claim about NATO enlargement — and this is a fact — every country that joins NATO undertakes to uphold its principles and policies, which includes a commitment that the alliance does not seek confrontation and poses no threat to Russia, as we affirmed at the Warsaw summit and which my colleague very well knows. NATO enlargement, as he also well knows, is not directed against Russia.

Every sovereign nation has a right to choose its own security arrangements. That is a fundamental principle of European security, one to which Russia has also subscribed and should respect. NATO's open-door policy has been a historic success and, together with the enlargement of the European Union, has spread stability and prosperity in Europe since the fall of the Berlin Wall.

I have a couple of comments on the Treaty on Open Skies, which was mentioned by my Russian colleague. The United States honours and will continue to fully honour our Open Skies Treaty commitments and remains willing to resolve issues related to its implementation. The United States and other States parties to the Open Skies Treaty have repeatedly raised concerns with Russia about its compliance with its Treaty obligations for a number of years. The concerns of the United States have been publicly documented since 2004, in our annual report to Congress on compliance with arms-control, non-proliferation and disarmament agreements. In June, the United States informed the Open Skies Consultative Commission (OSCC), the implementing body composed of representatives from all Treaty member States, including Russia, that we had formally determined Russia to be in violation of its Open Skies Treaty obligations.

After repeated unsuccessful attempts to engage Moscow diplomatically, both bilaterally and multilaterally through the OSCC and related forums in Vienna, we have decided to take some responsible measures in response to Russia's non-compliance, and will no longer permit certain goodwill implementation flexibilities that we have extended to Russia. Since it became clear that the United States would take Russia's Open Skies Treaty violations and Treaty compliance concerns seriously, Russia has sought to manufacture issues during flights, elevating implementation challenges to the level of compliance concerns. Any accusations that the United States fails to fully comply with its obligations under the Open Skies Treaty are simply false.

My last point would be that Russia seems to be very concerned about its neighbours. It needs to stop intervening in its neighbours' affairs.

With regard to the comment that Russia has never sent any troops to Ukraine, it is hard to believe that I am hearing that. Certainly, all of those little green men that were causing such havoc in Ukraine did not

just come out of nowhere. I would just submit to the representative of Russia that it is not the United States and its allies that are intervening in the sovereign territory of Ukraine; it is Russia.

Mr. Jabrayilov (Azerbaijan): I am obliged to take the floor again to reject the totally baseless accusations of the Armenian representative against my country and to respond to his speculations on the issues that are part of the negotiation process.

First, I am sure that everyone in this room was perplexed to hear the condemnation of the use of force by the country that used force to occupy the Azerbaijani territories, and whose destructive behaviour is the main reason for the current impasse in the negotiations. Armenia flagrantly violated its international legal obligations by using military force to occupy the territory of Azerbaijan, carry out ethnic cleansing there and establish a subordinate separatist entity in the occupied territories based on ethnicity.

Secondly, with regard to the repeated calls for confidence-building measures with Azerbaijan, Armenia must first make a concrete demonstration of its commitment to a negotiated settlement of the conflict and respect for international law by withdrawing its armed forces from Azerbaijan's occupied territories, thereby paving the way for the effective implementation of full and meaningful confidence-building measures in the South Caucasus region.

Lastly, I would like to recall that the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan has never been and will never be a subject of negotiations. Azerbaijan remains committed to a conflict settlement process based on that understanding. The sooner Armenia reconciles itself to that reality, the sooner the conflict will be resolved and the countries and peoples of the region will benefit from the prospects of cooperation and economic development.

Mr. Kazi (Bangladesh): We have taken note of the right of reply exercised by the representative of Myanmar. The Myanmar delegation previously also responded to our statements through its exercise of the right of reply. We have not taken the floor to further respond to those, but we realize that since many of the points made were not further responded to by our delegation, some misinformation is increasingly gaining ground within the international community.

We would like to make it absolutely clear that the situation in Myanmar's Rakhine state is far from stabilized. Just now we heard from a civil society actor at a side event that our delegation organized in conference room 7 that thousands of Rohingya are still wading across the river to cross into Bangladesh. One of the reasons why they are being compelled to do so is the sheer lack of humanitarian assistance being provided to them. Therefore, the proposition that the humanitarian situation at the border is being taken care of or is being managed is again perhaps a travesty of truth.

We have taken note of the decision to constitute the Union Enterprise Mechanism for Humanitarian Assistance, Resettlement, and Development in Rakhine, which is supposed to deal with humanitarian assistance, resettlement and other related issues. The Mechanism was set up after it was announced five days earlier. However, when we look at the terms of reference given to the Mechanism, we see that they clearly omit the whole issue of the repatriation of the forcibly displaced Rohingya into Bangladesh.

Now, humanitarian issues are not the main focus of the Committee. What we tried to say in our statement is just a reminder to concerned and responsible Member States to limit or reconsider their arms transfers to Myanmar's military forces. There is near consensus that the Myanmar security forces have resorted to the use of excessive and indiscriminate force, including the use of arson and systematic sexual violence, against the Rohingya to wipe them out of northern Rakhine state.

We are encouraged to see that a number of Member States are considering limiting their engagement with Myanmar's security forces, especially in terms of invitation, training and assistance. Those are important first steps, but the members of the international community, especially those that are still transferring arms to Myanmar, should revisit their policy decisions in that regard.

The Chair: I have been informed that we have to release the interpreters now. We will therefore hear the remaining rights of reply in English only. I thank the interpreters for their time.

Mrs. Imnadze (Georgia): I am responding to the statement made by the representative of Russian Federation.

Let me be clear. The invasion of, full-scale war with and occupation of Georgia's regions are simply acts

of aggression against a sovereign State. Furthermore, these actions violate all the fundamental principles and norms for which this Organization stands. Russia's presence in Georgia constitutes an act of aggression. It is an illegal military occupation and a flagrant violation of the main principles of international law, including the Charter of the United Nations, the Helsinki Final Act and dozens of other agreements within the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe system, as well as the provisions of the 2008 ceasefire agreement.

The Russian Federation is continuing its military buildup and process of actual annexation of the regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali of Georgia through the implementation of the so-called integration treaties, which envisage the full integration of Georgia's occupied regions into Russia's military, economic and social system. Once again, we call on the Russian Federation to comply with the norms of international law and withdraw all its illegal military forces from the territory of Georgia.

Mr. Tsymbaliuk (Ukraine): I feel obliged to respond to the very emotional statement made by the representative of the Russian Federation.

In short, I would like to stress again that there is no civil war in Ukraine. That is totally false. I also reject the accusation by the Russian Federation that Ukraine has not complied with the Minsk agreements. Ukraine remains fully committed to a peaceful resolution of the conflict in the Donbas region and to implementing the Minsk agreements.

Is it not time for the Russian State to stop pretending that it has nothing to do with the situation in the eastern part of Ukraine, that it is not part of that conflict, that it is not supporting the military and its proxies in the Donbas region, and that it does not send illicit supplies of military goods, weapons and personnel to that part of Ukraine?

Finally, according to various opinion polls, in the eyes of the Russian people Ukraine takes an honourable second place among the main enemies of the Russian Federation. At the same time, we are a peaceful State and we are not going to invade the territory of other States or interfere in their internal affairs. A massive campaign of propaganda and incitement to hatred against Ukraine and Ukrainians, perpetrated by Russian media and public figures, has played a significant role in triggering and fuelling Russia's aggression against Ukraine.

There was a reference to brotherhood. If the Russians sympathize with Ukraine and the Ukrainian people so much, I ask them to try to persuade their leadership to end the policy of supporting conflicts and interfering with the internal affairs of other States, including redirecting the huge wasted resources spent on igniting and maintaining conflicts in their neighbourhood to meeting the needs of the Russian people.

The Chair: I call on the representative of the Russian Federation, who wishes to speak on a point of order.

Mr. Yermakov (Russian Federation): This is actually huge discrimination. Why are we speaking English instead of Russian?

The Chair: We mentioned that because we are in the hands of the interpreters and at six o'clock —

Mr. Yermakov (Russian Federation): Right, but we are discussing issues concerning Russia and Russian has the same status as English as a United Nations language. Also, our Ukrainian and Georgian friends speak Russian. So why do we need to speak English? It is discrimination. So, Mr. President, should I speak Russian or English?

The Chair: English.

Mr. Yermakov (Russian Federation): Why? Could you tell me why?

The Chair: If the representative from Russia does not accept, I will speak in Arabic.

Mr. Yermakov (Russian Federation): Fine, why not? By speaking English, I will do a favour to my American partners and speak their native language because I admire the American people. It is a great nation. I am not joking. That is truly my conviction.

To be frank, when Mr. Wood took the floor, I was ready to hear from him that Russia was responsible for the nuclear attacks on Nagasaki and Hiroshima or something similar, but fortunately that did not happen. The way that he worded his statement shows that we have reason to believe that everything will be okay. The questions that were put forward, including with respect

to the Open Skies Treaty, are addressed in our bilaterals and we discuss them thoroughly. Here in the First Committee is not the place to discuss them in detail because not all of us here are experts. In that regard, I am ready to address any question being discussed.

As for fundamental principles, of course we must respect our obligations. If we only follow those obligations, everything will be okay. I want to express my deepest respect for the Ukrainian people. It is my full belief that the Ukrainian and Russian peoples are the same people. Since I know the history of my country, I know what we are. All of us in Russia have relatives in Ukraine and vice versa. Actually, after the coup d'état in Kyiv, more than 2 million Ukrainians left for Russia. That sent a huge signal to all the forces in Kyiv that want to instigate some kind of war among the Russians themselves. People who live in Donbas speak Russian, they are Russians at heart and they do not accept any possibility of a move by Ukraine towards becoming a Nazi State. It is nonsense for them. They fought the Nazis who came to our land during the Second World War. They know how to do it. They will fight them to the death because they will defend their own families.

Actually, I never said that Russia has nothing to do with Donbas. The people in Donbas are the same as those in the Moscow region or the Sakhalin region or any other region of the world, and we will definitely not let the people who sit in Kyiv now kill their people in Donbas. I will end here, and next time we will speak Russian.

Mr. Wood (United States of America): I do want to note the wonderful English spoken by the representative of the Russian Federation. My intervention will be very brief.

I say this in all sincerity. The United States would like to have a more constructive and cooperative relationship with the Russian Federation. Frankly, it is in our national security interests to do so, but Russia's efforts to change borders by force in Europe makes improving the relationship that much more challenging.

The meeting rose at 6.20 p.m.