



General Assembly

Seventy-sixth session

First Committee

9th meeting

Wednesday, 13 October 2021, 3 p.m.
New York

Official Records

Chair: Mr. Hilale(Morocco)

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

Statement by the President of the General Assembly

The Chair (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I would like to extend a warm welcome to His Excellency Mr. Abdulla Shahid, President of the General Assembly, who is here today to share his vision for the current session of the General Assembly. We are very pleased to have him here among us. I should like to reiterate how much I admire his energy and dynamism after having spent almost 19 hours travelling by plane and his being here with a smile, enthusiasm and readiness. I now invite him to address the Committee.

Mr. Shahid (President of the General Assembly): I wish to begin by congratulating you, Mr. Chair, and the other members of the Bureau on your elections. I look forward to working with the First Committee in the months ahead. I apologize for having been unable to address the Committee during its general debate last week owing to my being away on official travel. That trip, however, provided me with an opportunity to gain a more detailed perspective of the key priorities and expectations shared by Member States with regard to the work of the Committee. I am also very happy to note the return of in-person meetings, and subsequently the vibrant debates that are a hallmark of our discussions here at the United Nations.

In being tasked with disarmament and international security, the work of the First Committee is fundamental to the overall work of the United Nations. Attaining the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals, strengthening

human rights and recovering from the coronavirus disease pandemic all require a foundation of peace. Unfortunately, we face an array of issues that undermine our collective security. Until we properly address those issues, we cannot devote our full attention to the major social and environmental challenges of the current century. The pandemic has emphasized more than ever that humankind shares a common destiny. Let us use this moment, while that truth is universally evident, to commit to a new peace.

Seventy-five years after the General Assembly adopted the first resolution (resolution 1(I)), on nuclear disarmament, the threat of nuclear weapons remains. We therefore need to recommit ourselves and redouble our efforts towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons. The entry into force of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons earlier this year is an important milestone. I reiterate previous calls for Member States that have not yet done so to join the Treaty in order to ensure universal adherence to it. Moreover, as we commemorate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the opening for signature of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, let me repeat my call for Member States who have not yet done so to sign and ratify the Treaty, in particular the remaining annex 2 countries. I call on the States parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons to use the upcoming Review Conference as an opportunity to renew their commitment to agreeing on steps towards nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

In the twenty-first century, our discussions on peace and security extend to cyberspace as well, and we are

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all collectively committed to promoting the peaceful use of information and communication technologies. To that end, I encourage strengthened cooperation between the Open-ended Working Group on Developments in the Field of Information and Telecommunications in the Context of International Security and the Group of Governmental Experts on Advancing Responsible State Behaviour in Cyberspace in the Context of International Security. I also urge Member States to work together to ensure the peaceful use of outer space. We have seen a recent and welcome resurgence in space exploration. It is imperative that, alongside those endeavours, we develop the necessary legal instruments that facilitate the peaceful exploration of outer space.

More efforts are also needed to combat the illicit proliferation of small arms and light weapons. I welcome the successful conclusion of the seventh Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the 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, and I call for the effective implementation of the Programme of Action. It is my conviction that women and youth can make a meaningful contribution to our disarmament efforts. Let us take special pains to ensure that women and youth, as well as civil society, are more actively engaged in that work going forward.

We as Member States are diverse in our outlooks. However, there are certain hopes that unite all of us and certain interests that transcend our differences, including our common aspirations for a better tomorrow, the continuing safety and prosperity of our species and the desire to completely leave behind a world torn apart by violence and conflict. That is the world envisioned by my presidency of hope. It is my sincere hope that the work of the Committee can help achieve that vision. And it is my sincere belief that, if we let our common aspirations and hopes guide our debates and discussions, we can deliver on that vision.

The Chair (*spoke in French*): I thank the President of the General Assembly for his statement. I understand that he has to leave at this time owing to other engagements. We thank him once again for his presence among us today and look forward to working closely with him throughout the current session.

On the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the adoption by the General Assembly of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, the Committee

will now hear a pre-recorded video statement by the Executive Secretary of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization, Mr. Robert Floyd, in accordance with resolution 54/280, of 15 June 2000.

A pre-recorded video statement was shown in the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda items 92 to 107 (continued)

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

The Chair (*spoke in French*): The Committee will now continue its thematic discussion on specific subjects relating to the combined clusters 1 to 4 and the introduction and consideration of draft resolutions and decisions submitted under the agenda items allocated to the Committee.

Ms. Lindegren (Sweden): We are faced with a complex and difficult security environment in which new nuclear capabilities are being developed; landmark arms-control treaties are under threat or even being abandoned; and trust and confidence are eroding. We must protect and strengthen the international arms-control, disarmament and non-proliferation architecture and work together to achieve progress and concrete results — multilateralism matters.

Sweden emphasizes the importance of the successful outcome of the tenth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). Our common goal remains a world free of nuclear weapons. It is an indisputable fact that even a single nuclear explosion would have catastrophic humanitarian consequences. We must make progress in implementing obligations and delivering on previous commitments, not least with regard to article VI of the Treaty.

Through the Stockholm Initiative on Nuclear Disarmament, which brings together 16 non-nuclear-weapon States from different parts of the world and different security contexts, we aim to build political support for a pragmatic and results-oriented disarmament agenda that States parties can unite around — a common ground agenda. In an effort to further elaborate and build on the Berlin ministerial declaration on advancing nuclear disarmament, including the 22 so-called stepping stones, the members

of the Stockholm Initiative have also submitted a working paper on risk reduction. The paper proposes several constructive ideas that States can take forward. We invite all States parties to the NPT to study the work carried out by the Initiative and to align themselves with our proposals. We thank the many States that have already done so.

The nuclear-weapon States have a special responsibility for nuclear disarmament and arms control. In that regard, we welcome the extension by the United States and Russia of the New START Treaty and the strategic stability dialogue between the two countries. Our expectation is for the early commencement of negotiations on a new treaty to take effect following the expiration of the New START Treaty in 2026. Such a treaty could include the further reduction of strategic arsenals and the regulation of non-strategic weapons. The parties to it should also seek effective ways to mitigate the consequences of the demise of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty.

This year we celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the opening for signature of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), which constitutes a crucial part of the international disarmament and non-proliferation regime. Its entry into force should remain a top priority. Sweden's strong political and technical support for the CTBT is steadfast. We urge all remaining annex 2 States to promptly take concrete steps towards its ratification. Pending the entry into force of the Treaty, all existing moratoriums on nuclear-test explosions must be maintained.

Nuclear disarmament verification remains one of the success stories of recent years. Sweden is actively engaged in the International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification and the Quad Nuclear Verification Partnership, both of which continue to deliver concrete insight into future verification requirements. We strongly encourage more States to engage in that area.

The International Atomic Energy Agency plays an indispensable role in preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons, promoting nuclear and radiation safety and facilitating the use of nuclear technology, including in areas such as health, food and agriculture. It is essential that the Agency receive the necessary political and financial support. We must also ensure that the Agency has adequate inspection tools, and we should

therefore continue to work for the universalization of its additional protocols.

Mr. Tun (Myanmar): Nuclear deterrence rests on the assumption that mutually assured destruction is a guarantee among the users of nuclear weapons. The threat of the use of nuclear weapons has fuelled the proliferation of nuclear weapons over the past 75 years. The majority of States Members of the United Nations therefore believe that the only guarantee against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons is nothing other than their total elimination. We welcome any initiatives — no matter how large or small — aimed at achieving nuclear disarmament.

With regard to the Iranian nuclear issue, the effective and meaningful implementation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action by all sides is essential to the promotion of peace and stability in the Middle East. We also join others in calling for the complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization of the Korean peninsula. We reaffirm our commitment to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and the Bangkok Treaty and call for all relevant parties to work towards achieving the objectives of those treaties.

I wish to touch briefly on the subject of weapons of mass destruction. The Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) is the first international instrument to prohibit an entire category of weapons of mass destruction, and it has contributed to international peace and security. In its current form, however, the BWC has many shortcomings that make it inefficient in addressing the consequences of a biological weapons crisis. The strengthening of the Convention is the next logical step that we must all undertake. Having signed and ratified the BWC, we reaffirm our commitment to fulfilling all its provisions.

To continue with the topic of the BWC, there are reports from the night of 17 July regarding strange clouds of smoke appearing over the downtown area of Yangon city in Myanmar following a flyover by military aircraft. While it may have merely been smoke, there was widespread speculation among the residents of Yangon that the military was spreading harmful toxins in order to crackdown on protesters. The military chief in Myanmar previously stated that there is nothing he would not dare to do. We reiterate our condemnation of any use of chemical weapons anywhere, at any time, by anyone and under any circumstances.

I cannot stress enough that our commitment to the Chemical Weapons Convention will be brought into disrepute if the issues surrounding Myanmar's past chemical weapons programme are not resolved. According to information we have received, the chemical weapons production facility under the control of the military near the town of Tonbo, in Bago region, produced sulphur mustard in the 1980s and has not been declared. We believe the military was fully aware of that production, yet it was not reported to the elected civilian Government.

Turning to conventional weapons, we welcome the substantive outcome of the seventh Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the 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, held in July, which we believe will further contribute to international efforts aimed at regulating arms flows and combating the illicit proliferation of small arms and light weapons.

Mr. Mohd Nasir (Malaysia), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.

We believe that strong and effective control of the arms trade can help protect many innocent lives worldwide. The Arms Trade Treaty is instrumental in strengthening accountability in the conventional arms trade. Although we are not yet a party to any major international treaties on conventional weapons, the elected civilian Government of Myanmar has been studying such instruments with a view to ratifying them at an opportune time despite the behaviour and attitude of the military, which run contrary to the purposes of those treaties.

The sale of weapons constitutes a very profitable business, but it should not come at the cost of innocent lives. The Myanmar military is operating within its own twisted reality by killing innocent civilians using leading military hardware, most of which is imported. On behalf of the people of Myanmar, who have had enough of the military, I call on those States that are exporting weapons to the Myanmar military to halt those sales immediately. Although that may not stop the military from committing further atrocities, it could help save innocent lives.

Mr. Tchalare (Togo) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, the Togolese delegation would like to extend its warm congratulations to the Chair of the First Committee and the other members of the Bureau on

their elections. We wish them every success in their undertaking and assure them of our support.

Togo associates itself with the statements delivered on behalf of the Group of African States (see A/C.1/76/PV.8) and the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/76/PV.7), respectively, and would like to make the following remarks in our national capacity.

Togo would like to reaffirm its position that international peace and security depend, inter alia, on nuclear disarmament and the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. In an international political and security context characterized by ongoing conflicts, the occurrence of terrorist acts, persistent institutional crises and renewed tensions, inter alia, it is important to underscore the sensitivity of the nuclear issue and the obligation to work towards the complete elimination of nuclear weapons. In that regard, Togo wishes to commend the commitment of the Secretary-General, who has placed the issue of nuclear disarmament at the heart of his efforts.

Togo endorses the calls for nuclear disarmament that were reiterated during the high-level plenary meeting on the occasion of the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons, held on the margins of the current session of the General Assembly.

Togo would like to take this opportunity to stress the imperative need to constantly implement the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and once again calls on States not parties to the Treaty to accede to it in order to guarantee the universal character of that legal instrument and the full implementation of its three pillars, namely, the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and complete nuclear disarmament. Moreover, we urgently call on States not parties to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty — specifically those listed under annex 2 — to accede to it, given that putting an end to nuclear testing could constitute a first step towards nuclear disarmament.

Togo welcomes the entry into force of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and invites States not parties to the Treaty, in particular the nuclear-weapon States, to seize this historic opportunity to accede to it. Togo would also like to emphasize the compatibility that exists among the legal instruments I mentioned, the ultimate aims of which converge on nuclear disarmament. In that regard, we welcome the various calls for the negotiation of a comprehensive convention

on nuclear disarmament at the forthcoming meetings of the Conference on Disarmament, the United Nations Disarmament Commission and the States parties to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

Since its accession to international sovereignty, Togo has always placed strong emphasis on nuclear disarmament, which is an essential precondition for establishing lasting peace in the world. Togo is therefore a party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. It is also a signatory to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. My country also signed a five-year technical cooperation framework agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency on 11 March 2020 in order to support national efforts in the area of sustainable development. Moreover, on 4 June 2020, our National Assembly passed a law regulating the safe, secure and peaceful use of nuclear technology, pursuant to which the Council of Ministers adopted a decree establishing the National Nuclear Safety and Security Authority.

The progress made in the world's long march towards nuclear disarmament should not obscure the journey that lies ahead. Only a convergence of efforts will enable the international community to meet the challenges it faces in the field of nuclear disarmament. Togo therefore expresses its regret at the failure to adopt a consensus outcome document at the ninth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, which was held in New York from 27 April to 22 May 2015. In that regard, we urge the various parties to the Treaty to work towards the success of the tenth Review Conference, which is expected to be held soon.

Togo deplores the failure of the previous session of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction, despite the adoption of resolution 75/33, on 7 December 2020. We welcome the existence of various nuclear-weapon-free zones and urge States not parties to the various related treaties to make the necessary legal, financial and logistical arrangements to accede to them.

Togo calls on the international community to celebrate the virtues of using nuclear energy for peaceful purposes with a view to overcoming the socioeconomic challenges facing developing countries

in particular. We must draw on the lessons of the past and the present in order to build a better future. The memories of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, as well as the coronavirus disease crisis, should therefore lead us to better comprehend the urgent need to rethink our world and endeavour to prevent further disasters.

Mr. Choffat (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): Conventional arms control has a direct impact on saving lives. Allow me to highlight the following points in that regard.

First, Switzerland had the honour of presiding over the second Review Conference of the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM), which adopted a strong political declaration that underscored the determination of States parties to promote the standards established by the Convention and make progress towards its universalization. Thanks to the ambitious Lausanne Action Plan, the Convention can now draw on concrete and measurable objectives in order to advance its implementation until 2026. We hope that the annual CCM draft resolution will once again receive broad support this year, after having been adopted without a negative vote for the first time last year.

Secondly, we welcome the successful conclusion of the Group of Governmental Experts on Problems Arising from the Accumulation of Conventional Ammunition Stockpiles in Surplus. We support the objective of reflecting its ambitious and innovative recommendations by establishing an open-ended working group.

Thirdly, Switzerland remains concerned about the humanitarian impact of the growing urbanization of armed conflicts. We are convinced of the need to take measures to strengthen the protection of civilians against the humanitarian consequences of the use of explosive weapons in populated areas. We hope that the Irish-led efforts to establish a political declaration to that effect will soon reach a successful conclusion.

Turning to nuclear weapons, several challenges remain, in particular with regard to the Iranian nuclear programme. We hope that a solution can be found promptly with regard to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action and on all outstanding issues regarding Iran's Safeguards Agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency. We also remain deeply concerned about the advancement of the nuclear weapons and delivery systems programme of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. We are concerned about developments in

the field of delivery systems, and we look forward to bolstering efforts to prevent the proliferation of missile technology during our chairmanship of the Missile Technology Control Regime from 2022 to 2023.

At the next Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), we should work together to achieve an ambitious outcome in order to advance the implementation of the Treaty, including the many commitments undertaken, which remain valid. In that regard, the De-Alerting Group is working to achieve a positive result in reducing the operational capabilities of nuclear weapons. Switzerland will also take part in the first meeting of the States parties to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) as an observer and believes it essential to establish a constructive relationship between the NPT and the TPNW.

Switzerland condemns any use of chemical weapons in the strongest possible terms. We welcome the steps taken by the Conference of States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) in response to the findings of the Investigation and Identification Team. With regard to the aerosolized use of central-nervous-system-acting chemicals, Switzerland is convinced that the affirmation by States parties that such use is inconsistent with law enforcement as a “purpose not prohibited” under the CWC is necessary in order to safeguard the integrity of the Convention and uphold the norm. We call on all States parties to uphold the decision adopted at the twenty-sixth session of the Conference of States Parties to the Convention regarding that issue.

Moreover, it is imperative to strengthen the Biological Weapons Convention, both in terms of its institutional capacity and its ability to keep pace with scientific and technological advances. We must also strengthen the Secretary-General’s Mechanism for Investigation of Alleged Use of Chemical and Biological Weapons and preserve its independence.

It is crucial to prevent the emergence of armed conflicts in outer space. The normative framework must be strengthened in order to ensure that space remains a peaceful, secure and sustainable environment. We hope that we will be able to make progress in that area through the proposed open-ended working group on responsible behaviour in outer space. It will be important to ensure coherence, compatibility and complementarity between

such efforts and those under way within the framework of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space.

Mr. De Martin Topranin (Italy): Italy fully shares the goal of a peaceful and secure world free of nuclear weapons.

With its three mutually reinforcing pillars, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons remains the cornerstone of the international nuclear non-proliferation regime. It must be supported, upheld and preserved, especially in today’s difficult environment. We therefore invite States that have not yet done so to join the Treaty without delay and without conditions.

We strive for genuine progress on nuclear disarmament in a way that promotes international stability and based on the principle of undiminished security for all. In that connection, one specific measure we are pursuing is the prompt entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. In the meantime, we call on all States to respect the moratorium on nuclear-test explosions. Another key priority is for the Conference on Disarmament to immediately start negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty. We also wish to mention the potential of negative security assurances and to reiterate our support for the establishment of zones free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction.

The proliferation of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery continue to pose a major threat to international security. Italy supports the strengthening of the International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards system, including through universal adherence to comprehensive agreements and additional protocols. Moreover, securing sensitive materials, especially from access by terrorist networks, and implementing effective export controls continue to be major challenges. Those challenges point to the need for the universal and effective implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention.

Italy remains firmly committed to supporting the work of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. We also attach great importance to the Secretary-General’s Mechanism for Investigation of Alleged Use of Chemical and Biological Weapons — the only existing framework that provides for such investigations, which has been successful in the past. We are deeply concerned about the repeated

use of chemical weapons in recent years. We condemn their use by anyone, anywhere, anytime and under any circumstances in the strongest possible terms. We must respond to that alarming trend by ensuring accountability and continuing to take a clear stance against impunity for such heinous crimes.

Italy strongly supports all international instruments restricting or prohibiting the use of weapons contrary to international humanitarian law. In that context, the universalization and effective implementation of the Ottawa and Oslo Conventions are among our priorities. As part of our long-standing commitment, a dedicated trust fund for humanitarian demining was enacted by law in 2001, and since then Italy has devoted more than €62 million to mine-action programmes. We have also doubled our budget for 2021 as compared to 2020, as a sign of renewed commitment.

With the same engagement, we look forward to participating in the forthcoming Review Conference of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons. We welcome the intersessional work conducted so far, which has allowed for in-depth exchanges on several issues of concern, and we commend the ongoing work of the Group of Governmental Experts on Emerging Technologies in the Area of Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems. In that regard, Italy strongly supports the view that any existing or future weapons system must be subject to human control, in particular in relation to the ultimate decision to use lethal force.

We share the deep concern of the international community regarding the growing use and impacts of improvised explosive devices, which pose serious threats to civilians, humanitarian workers and peacekeeping personnel in conflict-afflicted and post-conflict areas. Italy is also concerned about the increasing illicit flows of small arms and light weapons, including in the so-called deep web, because they are responsible for causing the majority of casualties. In that context, we wish to reaffirm the fundamental link between sustainable development and peace and security, as recognized by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Today we attest to the affirmation of a new space paradigm, which goes hand-in-hand with large-scale and rapid technological developments, rendering the space domain increasingly complex and presenting scenarios in which the commercial race constitutes a new type of competition among States. Security in space is gradually becoming more interlinked

with economic and social stability on Earth, and it is becoming increasingly critical to ensure that future space exploration and exploitation activities be conducted in the most balanced way possible.

Mr. Yakut (Turkey): Turkey aligns itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union on combined clusters 1 to 4 (see A/C.1/76/PV.7). I would like to add the following remarks in my national capacity.

The current challenges in international security highlight the pressing need to uphold the ultimate objective of the total elimination of nuclear weapons. We welcome the extension of the New START Treaty and the renewed strategic stability dialogue between the United States and the Russian Federation.

Turkey believes that the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) remains the only credible path towards realistic, progressive and verifiable nuclear disarmament. We must focus on strengthening the full implementation of the NPT across its three pillars and achieving its universalization. The reaffirmation of past commitments during the upcoming tenth Review Conference of the Parties to the NPT will be a crucial first step in that regard. The Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative, of which Turkey is a member, produced a set of recommendations during the current review cycle, which aim to contribute to a forward-looking, balanced and substantive outcome for the Review Conference.

We commend the United States for having revealed the number of nuclear weapons in its possession. That important transparency and confidence-building measure must be replicated by other nuclear-weapon States as well. With regard to non-proliferation efforts, the preservation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) continues to be a priority area. We hope that the parties concerned will resume talks in Vienna very soon. In the meantime, upholding JCPOA commitments and obligations is of critical importance. The International Atomic Energy Agency must be allowed to continue its active role in monitoring and verifying the implementation of the JCPOA.

Turkey remains concerned about the ongoing nuclear and ballistic missile programmes of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. We urge that country to take urgent steps to abandon those programmes, return to full compliance with its NPT obligations and sign and ratify the Comprehensive

Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) as a matter of priority. We once again underscore the central role of the CTBT and call on the remaining annex 2 States to sign and ratify it as soon as possible. We also reiterate our call for the commencement of negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty in the Conference on Disarmament.

Turkey reaffirms its strong support for making progress on the 1995 resolution on convening a conference on the establishment of a zone in the Middle East free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems. We take note of the ongoing process of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction and hope it will achieve concrete results with the participation of all relevant stakeholders.

Turkey continues to be deeply concerned about the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the risk of those weapons being acquired by non-State actors. We reiterate that the use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere and under any circumstances is a crime against humanity and a grave violation of international law.

Turkey condemns the use of chemical weapons in the strongest terms, which has re-emerged with no accountability, particularly in Syria. The Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW)-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism and the two reports of the Investigation and Identification Team have established the Syrian regime's responsibility for chemical weapons use on at least eight occasions. The only credible way to prevent the recurrence of such abhorrent acts is to accurately declare and completely eliminate all the stockpiles and production facilities of the regime and hold the perpetrators accountable. Impunity in Syria cannot be tolerated. The regime should fully cooperate with the OPCW, in accordance with its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention. We reiterate our strong support for the independence and professionalism of the OPCW Technical Secretariat. The cooperation between the Technical Secretariat and the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism is also significant if we are to ensure accountability in Syria.

Turkey reiterates its strong support for the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention and encourages efforts towards its universalization. In that context, we would like to highlight the importance of

the Secretary-General's Mechanism for Investigation of Alleged Use of Chemical and Biological Weapons, the unique value of which lies in its independence, which needs to be preserved.

Mr. Lam Padilla (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): My country is firmly committed to the common goal of a world free of nuclear weapons and is a steadfast promoter of general and complete disarmament, particularly as nuclear disarmament conveys the spirit of one of the purposes of the United Nations, namely, the maintenance of international peace and security. For that reason, Guatemala is proud to belong to the first nuclear-weapon-free zone, which shows how Latin America and the Caribbean harnessed common interests and embodied them in the Treaty of Tlatelolco for the benefit of our peoples and the entire world.

My delegation reiterates its deep concern about the threat posed to humankind by the existence of nuclear weapons, including through their use or threat of use, as well as their humanitarian, environmental and economic impact. The only effective guarantee against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons is their prohibition and total elimination in a transparent, verifiable and irreversible manner and within a clearly defined time frame.

As a nation with a peaceful vocation, we welcome the entry into force of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which constitutes a firm step that legally mandates the elimination of nuclear weapons. Guatemala has signed that instrument and is currently in the final internal phase of its ratification. My country reiterates its view that the Treaty complements the objectives of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and strengthens its three fundamental pillars.

We participated in three preparatory committees for the 2020 Review Conference of the Parties to the NPT, and although it was postponed owing to the coronavirus disease pandemic, we look forward to the discussions and outcomes of the preparatory meetings being reflected in the Review Conference. That will help to translate commitments into concrete actions, which are increasingly urgent and necessary in the disarmament architecture.

We reaffirm our strong condemnation of any nuclear test, wherever and by whomsoever. At the same time, we call on the eight countries listed in annex 2 to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty to accede

to that instrument so as to enable its entry into force as soon as possible. We also call for progress to be made on a fissile material cut-off treaty that prohibits the production of such material and ensures the elimination of stockpiled material, thereby eliminating the element necessary for the manufacture of nuclear weapons.

Furthermore, my delegation recognizes that outer space is governed by the principles of non-appropriation, peaceful use and cooperation. At the same time, we express our concern regarding a possible arms race in outer space, taking into account that it could become an arena of military confrontation. Such actions would run contrary to the Charter of the United Nations and international law, as well as being exceedingly tragic for human life.

With regard to chemical and biological weapons, my delegation strongly condemns the use of such weapons by anyone, anywhere and under any circumstances. There is no justification whatsoever for their use, which is legally prohibited under the respective Conventions. The scenarios in which attacks are carried out with those types of weapons constitute a serious violation of the rules-based international order that we adopted pursuant to international law, and under no circumstance should such events go unpunished. It is in the hands of the international community to hold those who resort to using such weapons to account through the mechanisms that the international community itself legitimately and legally created for that purpose.

One of the priorities of my Government's agenda is citizen security, which has been gravely affected by armed violence throughout our country's history. That scourge is aggravated by the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, which undermines the protection and physical and moral integrity of our peoples and undeniably hinders the creation of an environment with adequate conditions to promote comprehensive and sustainable human development. We believe that the Arms Trade Treaty is a suitable instrument capable of strengthening the capacity of States to share best practices in the effective regulation of the international arms trade by providing clear guidelines to prevent the diversion of arms.

My full statement will be made available on the e-deleGATE portal.

Mr. Mlynár (Slovakia): At the outset, I would like to congratulate the Chair of the First Committee and the entire Bureau on the assumption of their roles.

Slovakia wishes them every success in their endeavours to steer this prominent body, and I assure them of my delegation's full support.

Slovakia associates itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union (see A/C.1/76/PV.7). We would like to add a few additional points in our national capacity.

The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery remains a major threat to international peace and security. The global non-proliferation system, which is based on international treaties, export-control regimes and other initiatives and which has been solidly built up in recent decades, has been challenged by various breaches of its norms and efforts and by some States seeking to develop weapons of mass destruction or possess the knowledge to enable such capabilities.

Compliance with international obligations is a fundamental precondition for the effective functioning of any treaty-based international arrangement, including the non-proliferation regime. Disrespect for mutually agreed norms endangers peace and security and is a cause for grave concern. The risk of terrorists acquiring such weapons, their precursors or means of delivery continues to be real and must not be underestimated. International export-control regimes also provide a critical contribution towards a safer world, as they underpin existing disarmament and non-proliferation instruments.

Slovakia reiterates its firm stance that any use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere, at any time and under any circumstances is unacceptable. States and non-State actors must be fully aware that any use of chemical weapons constitutes a flagrant violation of international law and is categorically reprehensible. Impunity for the use of chemical weapons must not be tolerated.

Slovakia supports the universalization of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and calls on States not yet party to the CWC to join it without further delay. Slovakia fully supports the work and mandate of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and has full confidence in the professionalism, impartiality and independence of the OPCW Technical Secretariat. We call on those hindering the application of the mandate of that Organization to refrain from doing so.

Slovakia took note of the reports of the OPCW Technical Secretariat concerning the elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons programme. The slow rate of progress is worrisome, and we call on Syria to seriously engage and fully cooperate with the OPCW and comply with its obligations under the Convention. In that context, Slovakia supported the decision taken at this year's Conference of States Parties to the CWC to suspend the voting rights and privileges of the Syrian Arab Republic. Slovakia continues to support the work of the OPCW Declaration Assessment Team, the Fact-Finding Mission and the Investigation and Identification Team.

The assassination attempt on the Russian citizen Alexei Navalny is another shocking use of a military chemical nerve agent of the Novichok group, which Slovakia strongly condemns. Such use of chemical weapons is absolutely unacceptable, and the perpetrators must be held accountable. We continue to call on the Russian Federation to ensure an impartial and transparent investigation in close cooperation with the OPCW. With a view to reinforcing the ban on chemical weapons, Slovakia also participates in, and supports the efforts of, the International Partnership Against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons.

Slovakia considers the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC) to be an important pillar of the disarmament and non-proliferation architecture and supports the global norm against biological weapons. Our ongoing experience of the coronavirus disease pandemic has highlighted biological risks and vulnerabilities and is testing the resilience of our societies. It could also serve as the impetus to intensify our work within the framework of the BTWC, in particular as we approach the forthcoming Review Conference of the Parties to the Convention.

The Acting Chair: I am sorry, the representative of Slovakia is out of time.

Ms. Kesse Antwi (Ghana): Ghana fully supports the statements delivered on the combined clusters 1 to 4 on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/76/PV.7) and the Group of African States (see A/C.1/76/PV.8), respectively. Given that those statements extensively addressed nuclear disarmament and other aspects of disarmament, my delegation wishes to make the following additional remarks in its national capacity focusing mostly on conventional weapons.

Ghana is deeply concerned about the escalating human suffering, death toll and gendered impacts of the illicit proliferation of conventional weapons in communities around the world, especially in Africa. In that regard, we reiterate the continuing importance 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 and its International Tracing Instrument (ITI); the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT); the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention; the Convention on Cluster Munitions; and the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons in our global efforts to prevent the illicit acquisition, proliferation and misuse of conventional weapons. The universalization of, and adherence to, those treaties and instruments are necessary for the maintenance of global peace and security.

We further underline the correlation between peace, security, disarmament and sustainable development and urge Member States to support the Secretary-General's disarmament agenda and to prioritize disarmament that saves lives. We note in that regard the links between the disarmament agenda and the African Union's flagship initiative to silence the guns and end all wars in Africa.

In addressing the scourge of the illicit proliferation of small arms and light weapons, we strongly advocate a holistic approach throughout the life cycle with a view to ensuring the safe, secure and accountable management of conventional ammunition and preventing the diversion of stockpiles to unauthorized users. In that context, we welcome the consensus outcome document (A/CONF.192/BMS/2021/1, annex) of the seventh Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, which was held in New York in July. We look forward to the eighth Biennial Meeting of States, scheduled to be held in 2022, as an opportunity to build on the outcomes of the previous meeting, strengthen the Programme of Action, discuss international aid and cooperation and advance the International Tracing Instrument.

While Ghana lauds the progress made by the Group of Governmental Experts on Problems Arising from the Accumulation of Conventional Ammunition Stockpiles in Surplus in dealing with the excessive accumulation of ammunition, we believe that States that currently apply the provisions of the Programme of Action to ammunition should continue to do so, as reflected in the

outcome document (A/CONF.192/2018/RC/3, annex) of the third Review Conference of the Programme of Action, which was held here in New York in 2018.

The outcome of the seventh Conference of States Parties to the ATT, held in Geneva in August, was a welcome step towards implementing effective national control systems for the transfer of conventional arms and towards addressing the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects. We also reaffirm the importance of international cooperation and assistance for the implementation of the ATT and encourage States that are yet to subscribe to the Treaty to do so in order to achieve its universalization.

In conclusion, we urge all Member States to show the necessary political will to address the threats posed by the illicit accumulation and proliferation of conventional weapons in a proactive and decisive manner.

The full version of this statement will be posted on the e-deleGATE portal.

Ms. Arumpac-Marte (Philippines): The Philippines stands by the statements delivered by the representative of Indonesia, on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, and the representative of Malaysia, on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (see A/C.1/76/PV.7) and would like to add the following remarks in our national capacity.

We are concerned that, even amid the coronavirus disease pandemic, we have seen the deepening of mistrust, the modernization and refinement of nuclear-weapons capabilities and the lowering of the threshold for nuclear-weapons use in our region and beyond. The catastrophic humanitarian consequences of the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons are an existential threat that we need to collectively address. To echo the words of the Secretary-General, we have a choice between breakdown or breakthrough.

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is the cornerstone of nuclear non-proliferation, disarmament and the peaceful uses of energy. We call on all Member States to fully implement the NPT. We support the 13 practical steps and the 64-point action plan that was agreed upon at the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the NPT. We hope that Member States will engage constructively and address the outstanding issues without delay in order to ensure the success of the upcoming NPT Review Conference.

We reiterate our call for the early entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and urge the eight remaining annex 2 States to ratify it without further delay. We commend the International Atomic Energy Agency for its role in accelerating and expanding the contribution of atomic energy to peace, health and prosperity throughout the world and recognize its contribution to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

We emphasize the role of nuclear-weapon-free zones in reinforcing the global nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation framework at the regional level. Stronger cooperation and coordination between and among the countries in those zones and the nuclear-weapon States would affirm that important role. We take pride in having been the fifty-third country to ratify the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. The Treaty represents the efforts being made towards the universalization of global norms against nuclear weapons, fulfils the goals set out in the NPT and delegitimizes once and for all the use of nuclear weapons.

The Philippines takes an active role in the implementation of the Biological Weapons Convention. We must ensure the financial sustainability of the Convention; strengthen international cooperation, preparedness, response and assistance; and foster greater synergies between and among the relevant international and regional organizations. We are honoured to be a member of the Executive Council of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. International cooperation for the elimination of chemical weapons stockpiles and their non-proliferation remains an urgent concern. We reaffirm our commitment to the objectives of the Chemical Weapons Convention and call for the full, effective and non-discriminatory implementation of all its provisions.

The Philippines supports the implementation of strong regulations covering conventional weapons. We attach importance to the Arms Trade Treaty and remain active in 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 President-designate of the twenty-second Annual Conference of the High Contracting Parties to Amended Protocol II to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, we look forward to achieving progressive outcomes, especially with respect to

emerging technologies in the area of lethal autonomous weapons systems.

There is a need to address the threat posed by improvised explosive devices, in particular by non-State actors. We fully support efforts to strengthen mechanisms for international cooperation in that regard. Explosive remnants of war and unexploded ordnance such as mines and cluster munitions continue to threaten lives. We urge the international community to pursue mine action in a manner that affirms the centrality of supporting victims and establishing solid national capacities for affected countries.

The weaponization of outer space runs counter to the objective of exploring and preserving it for peaceful uses. We therefore call on space-faring nations to respect applicable laws and norms on the use of weapons in outer space and develop appropriate and effective instruments to prevent an arms race in outer space. We welcome the endorsement by the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space of the Space 2030 agenda and support its adoption by the General Assembly.

In conclusion, it has been said that our world has never been more threatened or divided than it is now. As sovereign States, we bear the primary role to safeguard security, and we must work together to uphold the global order and ensure the implementation of our commitments under the relevant international agreements, in line with the Charter of the United Nations.

Mr. Souliyong (Lao People's Democratic Republic): My delegation aligns itself with the statements delivered by the representatives of Malaysia and Indonesia, on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, respectively (see A/C.1/76/PV.7). I would like to add a few remarks in my national capacity.

Nuclear weapons pose the most dangerous threat to humankind and international peace and security. We therefore firmly believe that their total elimination is the only absolute guarantee against their use or threat of use and that they must never be used again under any circumstances. The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons remains the cornerstone of the non-proliferation and disarmament regime and is the only relevant international instrument that is being enforced and advancing towards universality.

The Lao People's Democratic Republic believes that the entry into force of the historic agreement on the

Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons earlier this year will further contribute to the realization of a world free of nuclear weapons. In that regard, we continue to underline the importance of the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and call on the remaining annex 2 States to sign and ratify it.

The Lao People's Democratic Republic recognizes the significant role played by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in nuclear non-proliferation and promoting the peaceful use of nuclear science and technology. We therefore joined other ASEAN members in signing practical arrangements with the IAEA in September 2019. Like all States members of ASEAN, the Lao People's Democratic Republic highly values the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones, including the principles enshrined in the Treaty on the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone.

With regard to conventional weapons, the Lao People's Democratic Republic is concerned about the wide range of security and humanitarian impacts arising from the illicit manufacture, transfer and circulation of small arms and light weapons, given that such weapons are widely used by criminals and drug traffickers. My delegation therefore supports the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects in tackling that issue. Although conventional weapons do not have the same destructive impact as weapons of mass destruction, their extensive use can also cause harmful humanitarian impacts with long-term consequences. For example, explosive remnants of war continue to have humanitarian consequences long after conflicts have ended.

Like other Member States, the Lao People's Democratic Republic has suffered the traumatic experience of the humanitarian and developmental impact of the use of conventional weapons. For that reason, my country is a party to major international instruments in that area, such as the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and four of its Protocols and attaches particular importance to the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM).

The legacy of the Indochina war left us facing numerous challenges that continue to affect us today. They are the result of more than 270 million cluster sub-munitions being dropped on Lao soil and up to 30 per

cent of them failing to detonate on impact. Our country continues to encounter the negative consequences of those sub-munitions, which continue to kill and maim innocent citizens, particularly children, and hamper socioeconomic development and poverty-eradication efforts in our country. As one of the countries worst affected by cluster munitions, we adopted goal 18 of our own national sustainable development goal, entitled “Lives safe from unexploded ordnance”. We have also integrated our CCM obligations into our national strategy for unexploded ordnance, entitled “The Safe Path Forward II”.

In that regard, we welcomed the adoption of Lausanne Action Plan during the second Review Conference of the CCM in September, which will provide clear guidance for States parties in strengthening the implementation of the Convention and realizing its objectives. The Lao People’s Democratic Republic remains committed to actively promoting the universalization of the CCM by working closely with all States parties and the international community.

In conclusion, the Lao People’s Democratic Republic counts on all countries and development partners to continue to enhance international cooperation and increase the assistance provided to affected countries in order to ensure that people can enjoy their right to development and improve their standard of living. The Lao People’s Democratic Republic will continue to promote consistent dialogue among affected States, donor countries and relevant stakeholders in upholding our commitment to working together to ensure that all lives are safe.

Mr. Izquierdo Ortiz de Zárate (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): Spain endorses the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union (see A/C.1/76/PV.7).

For five decades, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons has facilitated important progress on disarmament, non-proliferation and the promotion of the peaceful uses of nuclear technology. We must today reaffirm its centrality and ensure the success of the tenth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty. To that end, we must make progress on those three fronts. However, any future lack of progress towards a world free of nuclear weapons would only exacerbate the deep sense of frustration that has recently emerged in a large part of the international community. Spain therefore continues to support the so-called stepping stones, which are the concrete and realistic proposals

put forward by the Stockholm Initiative on Nuclear Disarmament — the fourth ministerial meeting of which was held in Madrid in July — that can decisively contribute to reconciling today’s divergent positions.

As we affirmed at the Article XIV Conference held a few weeks ago, Spain reiterates its steadfast commitment to the early entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. Maintaining the de facto moratorium on nuclear testing is essential at present but should not obscure the need for the Treaty to fully enter into force. We must continue to support the work of the Preparatory Commission. My country also continues to support the resumption of negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament towards the eventual adoption of a fissile material cut-off treaty, which would guarantee the irreversibility of nuclear disarmament.

The extension of the New START Treaty and the resumed strategic stability dialogue between the United States and Russia offer the prospect of a new framework being adopted to control nuclear weapons. We hope that such a framework will soon materialize and encompass all delivery systems and all types of weapons and that other relevant stakeholders will opt to participate in it. We call on the nuclear-weapon States to strengthen their dialogue on policies and doctrines.

Spain reiterates its strongest condemnation of any use of chemical weapons. The Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons is an example of success, having spearheaded the near-total elimination of such weapons. However, the recent use of such weapons in the context of internal armed conflicts, as well as for assassination purposes, constitute worrisome new challenges and warrant our total condemnation. There should be no room for impunity — all cases of chemical weapons use should be clarified through comprehensive and transparent investigations. The Security Council must maintain an approach of constant vigilance and monitoring.

We should strengthen the framework of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention and promote the adoption of concrete measures, such as an effective verification protocol. We should also support and strengthen the Secretary-General’s Mechanism for Investigation of Alleged Use of Chemical and Biological Weapons and preserve its independence. The acquisition of weapons of mass destruction by terrorist groups or other non-State actors continues to be a real threat, which is why we underscore the importance

of Security Council resolutions 1540 (2004) and 2325 (2016), as well as other international instruments. Spain also supports the adoption of specific measures to make progress in the area of gender and disarmament, such as the International Atomic Energy Agency's Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellowship Programme.

We have built a solid framework to address the challenges posed by the proliferation of small arms and light weapons through instruments such as the Arms Trade Treaty and the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. We should continue to support the capacity-building of States with fewer resources so that they can tackle that scourge with better guarantees.

We must promptly reach an agreement on the proposals made by the Group of Governmental Experts on Emerging Technologies in the Area of Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems, which should enable the establishment of a regulatory framework on the deployment and use of such weapons systems and thereby satisfy the requirements of human control and other principles of international humanitarian law. Moreover, in areas such as the military use of artificial intelligence and biotechnology, we should promote responsible research in order to prevent the improper use of new findings from giving rise to new dangers. Export-control regimes for military or dual-use equipment and technology are an effective tool to promote the responsible transfer of such technologies, thereby preventing them from falling into the wrong hands or exacerbating conflicts. Spain applies the highest control standards in that regard and —

The Acting Chair: I am sorry, the representative of Spain is out of time.

Mr. Dandy (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): I wish to once again thank the Chair of the First Committee for his able management of our work.

My delegation associates itself with the statement made by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/76/PV.7).

The Syrian Arab Republic was one of the first countries in the Middle East to sign the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) in 1968, based on our conviction that the possession of such destructive weapons by any country in the region would

constitute a threat to regional and international peace and security. Syria was also a pioneer in calling for the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction. In 2003, during our membership of the Security Council, Syria submitted a draft resolution aimed at ridding the Middle East of all weapons of mass destruction, but the United States blocked it in order to protect Israel.

Syria emphasizes that the outcome of the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the NPT regarding the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, based on the resolution adopted at the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference, remains valid until such a zone is established. The international community is also compelled to exert pressure on Israel to accede to the NPT as a non-nuclear-weapon State and to subject all its nuclear facilities and activities to the comprehensive safeguards of the International Atomic Energy Agency in order to safeguard regional and international peace and security.

My country welcomed the convening of the first session of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction and participated in its work along with other countries of the region. Nevertheless, the United States, as a nuclear Power and depositary of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, along with Israel, refused to participate in the Conference, thereby demonstrating that those countries refuse to rid the Middle East of those destructive weapons.

Syria reaffirms its total condemnation and rejection of the use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere, at any time and under any circumstances. Syria therefore voluntarily joined the Chemical Weapons Convention in 2013 and fulfilled all our obligations under the Convention in record time. We were also keen to continue to cooperate with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) with a view to closing our chemical dossier as quickly as possible. Regrettably, some countries blatantly politicized that dossier, either by continuing to make baseless accusations against Syria, which originated from terrorist groups and their supporters, or by questioning Syria's cooperation with the OPCW. Those same countries also exploited reports lacking credibility and professionalism and manipulated the provisions of the Convention to establish illegal mechanisms and adopt a resolution imposed by Western countries against my country at the twenty-fifth session of the Conference

of States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention, thereby setting a dangerous precedent in the course of the work of the OPCW.

In conclusion, some Western countries that claim to be intent on strengthening the non-proliferation regime are the same ones that invented all kinds of weapons of mass destruction and used them in the First and Second World Wars. Those same countries continue to this date to develop all kinds of weapons of mass destruction, in contradiction of their relevant international obligations. My country calls on all Member States to assume their responsibilities in ceasing to provide or illicitly traffic weapons and ammunition of all kinds and categories to terrorist organizations, which poses a threat to the security and safety of all our countries.

Mrs. Jakob (Germany): We will submit the full version of our statement in writing.

Let me first draw the attention of the First Committee to the substantial consensus recommendations recently agreed upon in the Group of Governmental Experts on Problems Arising from the Accumulation of Conventional Ammunition Stockpiles in Surplus. We should build on that success and use the positive momentum to elaborate a new global framework that addresses existing gaps in life-cycle ammunition management, including through international cooperation and assistance. We therefore suggest establishing an open-ended working group in 2022, and we count on the broadest possible support of Member States.

We are approaching the tenth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), and I should like to thank Ambassador Zlauvinen for his outstanding stewardship in making the Review Conference possible. In the face of power shifts, growing tensions and arms-race dynamics, the NPT remains the bedrock of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. The Treaty is a success story of multilateralism and comprises tremendous achievements, but it is a living treaty and one that must stand the test of time over and over again. We must remain fully engaged.

With respect to Iran, the full implementation of all the provisions contained in Security Council resolution 2231 (2015) and both its annexes is essential. Germany remains committed to the revitalization and full implementation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) by all sides. We call on Iran to turn

words into action and return to the negotiation table. Time is on no one's side. We remain deeply concerned about the overall trajectory of the Iranian nuclear programme, which is characterized by systematic JCPOA violations, activities lacking plausible civilian justification, reduced transparency and insufficient cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). We urge Iran to return to full compliance with its political commitments and legal obligations in the nuclear field.

Turning to North Korea, the continuing development of its nuclear-weapons programme and ballistic-missiles arsenal has become a major challenge to global non-proliferation efforts and must be met with unity and resolve. We fully support the efforts of the United States and South Korea to establish dialogue and negotiations with North Korea. We urge the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to react positively to those initiatives. Only by embarking on a path towards complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization can North Korea regain the trust of the international community, expect sanctions relief and lay the ground for sustainable peace in the region.

The safeguards system of the IAEA is a fundamental component of the nuclear non-proliferation regime. The comprehensive safeguards agreements, together with the additional protocols, constitute the current IAEA verification standard, and we strongly support their universalization.

Nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation are two sides of the same coin. We know that limited progress on nuclear disarmament has burdened the NPT community since the adoption of the 2010 Action Plan. Against that backdrop, the extension of the New START Treaty is an important step. The limits imposed on the strategic arsenals of the two biggest nuclear Powers and the transparency provided by the verification regime contribute substantially to global security. In their decision to extend the New START Treaty, Russia and the United States have generated renewed momentum in the area of arms control and disarmament and inspired hope for further steps to come.

In that light, we welcome the joint statement by both Presidents on a renewed strategic stability dialogue. Germany strongly supports United States-Russian strategic talks leading to broader arms-control arrangements. We hope that the impetus generated by the United States and Russia will also incentivize

China and stimulate tangible results within the process involving the five permanent members of the Security Council. That is why last year's ministerial meeting of the Stockholm Initiative on Nuclear Disarmament, held in Berlin, presented a road map comprising more than 20 practical steps to further advance nuclear disarmament, such as encouraging maximum transparency on arsenals, broader arms-control negotiations and stronger negative security assurances.

We invite all States parties to the NPT to support those proposals, and we call on the nuclear-weapon States to jointly take the steps necessary for their implementation. Now is the time to reduce nuclear risks. The Stockholm Initiative has substantiated its views on how that can be operationalized as a matter of urgency in order to facilitate nuclear disarmament — not to replace it.

The NPT Review Conference is an opportunity we must seize. Together we must be clear that the commitments we have made in the past are firm across all three pillars. We need to see more progress in implementing those commitments and we need to renew the common vision of the NPT and its future, all of which is possible. In that spirit, by showing respect for different priorities on the basis of a shared and comprehensive understanding of the Treaty, we can further advance —

The Acting Chair: I am sorry, the representative of Germany is out of time.

Mr. Tito (Kiribati): I have the honour of delivering this joint statement on behalf of Kazakhstan and my own country, Kiribati, on the positive obligations of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

The first meeting of States parties to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons will be held in Vienna in March 2022. We would like to suggest that the meeting should devote particular attention to the Treaty's positive obligations as contained in its articles 6 and 7. Those provisions are central to the humanitarian goals of the Treaty and ensure that it addresses the harm caused by the past use and testing of nuclear weapons and that it seeks to prevent future harm.

To highlight the importance and promote the implementation of those provisions, we would further suggest that the first meeting of States parties should examine victim assistance, environmental remediation and international cooperation and assistance under

a separate agenda item, or under individual agenda items, and encourage the active participation of all States, international organizations, civil society groups, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), survivors and affected communities. The meeting should also follow the example set by that of other humanitarian disarmament treaties by adopting a final report, declaration and action plan to address the positive obligations of the Treaty. Over the coming months, States parties should focus on how best to promote those obligations at the meeting. Kazakhstan and Kiribati will help coordinate the drafting of a working paper on that topic for the meeting and provide a forum for other like-minded States and relevant stakeholders to make it as widely inclusive and representative as possible.

We would also recommend the following guidelines for consideration by States parties as they prepare for the meeting. States parties should recommit to the positive obligations outlined in articles 6 and 7 of the Treaty. In discussions and outcome documents, they should make clear that implementing those provisions is a priority and essential to achieving the humanitarian goals of the Treaty. They should further establish a framework for implementing those provisions and identifying initial action items, with deadlines where appropriate, and overarching principles. Such a framework and specific steps could be laid out in a meeting action plan.

States parties should also set deadlines and parameters for future reporting on national measures regarding victim assistance, environmental remediation and international cooperation and assistance. In such reports, they should share their national expertise, document their progress with respect to implementation and identify their needs, for which other States parties could provide assistance where they are in a position to do so. They should also create a mechanism to ensure that work continues to be carried out on the obligations contained in articles 6 and 7 between meetings.

Ideally, the first meeting of States parties should establish intersessional standing committees, but it could also explore using less formal working groups. Either at the first meeting or in a future meeting, States parties could create a group composed of experts from States, international organizations and civil society to discuss and evaluate the process of establishing an international trust fund for States parties that have been affected by the use or testing of nuclear weapons. Such

a group could examine the precedent for the creation of a trust fund based on other humanitarian treaties.

We should ensure that all voices are taken into account at the first meeting of States parties and in future discussions on the positive obligations to assist victims, ensure environmental remediation and provide international cooperation and assistance. Those voices should include affected communities, civil society, the ICRC and international organizations.

In conclusion, we encourage all States parties and signatories to the Treaty to join our work in providing —

The Acting Chair: I am sorry, the representative of Kiribati is out of time.

Mr. Mbingo (Eswatini): Eswatini associates itself with the statements delivered by the representatives of Indonesia and Ghana, on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/76/PV.7) and the Group of African States (see A/C.1/76/PV.8), respectively.

The illicit trade in, and transfer and circulation of, small arms and light weapons, including their excessive accumulation and uncontrolled spread in many parts of the world, remains an issue of serious concern not only for Eswatini but globally. Eswatini therefore attaches great importance to the central role 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 and the International Tracing Instrument (ITI) as crucial multilateral instruments dedicated to fighting the illicit flow of small arms and light weapons and tackling their multifaceted effects, which pose a threat to international peace and security.

Eswatini recognizes the extensive work that has been done to address the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, including the 2000 Bamako Declaration, the Constitutive Act of the African Union, the 2002 Protocol relating to the establishment of the African Union Peace and Security Council, the 2004 Southern African Development Community Protocol, the African Union's Agenda 2063, the Silencing the Guns in Africa initiative and other subregional initiatives.

Eswatini calls on all States to fulfil their obligations with regard to reporting and technological transfers and ensuring the unhindered flow of international cooperation and assistance, as mandated by the United Nations. Eswatini also urges the States Members of the United Nations from developed economies to render

greater technical and financial assistance to developing countries like Eswatini to help them realize the overall objectives of the Programme of Action and the ITI with a view to eradicating the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. Eswatini believes that such efforts would serve to promote national and regional initiatives and assist efforts at the global level.

Eswatini acknowledges the efforts undertaken by States parties to the Arms Trade Treaty since its entry into force, as well as the convening of the sixth Conference of States Parties to the Treaty, which was held in Geneva in August. Eswatini urges States parties to the Treaty to implement it in a balanced and objective manner that protects the interests of all States, not merely those of the major international producing and exporting States, and to avoid any infringement of the legitimate right of States to satisfy their national security and self-defence needs, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations.

Eswatini reaffirms the sovereign right of States to acquire, manufacture, export, import and retain conventional arms, their parts and components for their self-defence and security needs, in accordance with the Charter. Finally, Eswatini stresses that arms transfers to unauthorized recipients fuel conflicts and the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. We urge all States to refrain from and prohibit arms transfers to any recipient without the authorization of the competent national authority in the importing State.

Mr. Gimolieca (Angola): Angola aligns itself with statements delivered by the representatives of Ghana, on behalf of the Group of African States (see A/C.1/76/PV.8), and Indonesia, on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/76/PV.7). I wish to make the following remarks in my national capacity.

The escalation of tensions at the global level, especially among the world's major Powers, should be of grave concern to us all. Our anxiety is further exacerbated when such tensions occur among the largest nuclear Powers.

The African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty, also known as the Treaty of Pelindaba, was signed in Cairo on 11 April 1996 by 47 of the 53 African States. Angola signed the Treaty on that date and ratified it on 20 June 2014. Against that background, we deem it important to mention that, as a State party to the Treaty of Pelindaba, Angola is engaged in laying the foundations and approving the legal instruments aimed

at fulfilling the intended purposes and objectives advocated by the original signatories to the Treaty with a view to establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone on the African continent. We also strive to achieve the objectives enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations in tackling issues relating to the maintenance of international peace and security.

The Treaty plays a central role in harmonizing the actions of Member States in order to meet established goals, as reflected in the final report of the 2021 Conference on Disarmament (A/76/27) and the report of the Secretary-General (A/75/982), which emphasize the importance of the full implementation and effectiveness of the Treaty. As a State party to the Treaty, we are engaged in fulfilling our commitments to the achievement and preservation of a world without nuclear weapons.

Angola is not indifferent to the position of the United Nations on the threat posed by nuclear weapons or the need to adopt relevant international and national measures for nuclear disarmament and the total elimination of such weapons. Angola has also endeavoured to adjust its relevant legislation in order to respond to the commitments made within the framework of international instruments and to fulfil its obligations. In the same vein, the newly established Atomic Energy Regulatory Authority of Angola focuses on scientific and technological development with a view to pursuing the objectives of its policy on the use of nuclear energy.

In conclusion, Angola reaffirms its support for the full implementation of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Africa with a view to promoting international peace and security.

Mr. Ferreira Silva Aranda (Portugal): In addition to the statement made on behalf of the European Union (see A/C.1/76/PV.7), we would like to share the following remarks on the combined clusters 1 to 4 in our national capacity.

In his recent *Our Common Agenda* report (A/75/982), the Secretary-General describes some of the growing risks to peace and security, including technologies capable of disrupting global stability, increasingly fragile agreements on nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, as well as emerging domains of potential conflict or lawlessness, which highlight gaps in our governance architecture. We therefore need, on the one hand, to enforce and

reinforce pre-existing instruments, and, on the other, to establish new instruments to address governance gaps.

One such example of a governance gap is in the area of outer space, which we recognize as a global commons to be used peacefully by all and for the benefit of all. Given that we unfortunately still lack a legally binding instrument to ensure a safe and secure space environment, we commend the work being carried out with a view to reducing space threats by means of voluntary norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviour. We trust that that work may contribute to addressing the challenge of monitoring and verification, as well as to preventing an arms race in space. We welcome the involvement of various stakeholders committed to outer-space policies, including from academia, non-governmental organizations and the private sector.

With respect to the existing instruments we need to enforce, we immediately think about the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), which we usually refer to as the cornerstone of the non-proliferation and disarmament architecture. We look forward to the convening of the much-awaited tenth Review Conference of the Parties to the NPT, which we regard as an additional opportunity to promote its full and universal implementation and to contribute to attaining, in a progressive manner, the vision that we believe is shared by all States of a world free of nuclear weapons. On the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the opening for signature of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, we urge all States that have not yet acceded to that important instrument to do so without further delay.

The other two pillars of the effective rules-based multilateralism we strive to achieve are the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention, the full implementation of which we continue to wholeheartedly defend. We reaffirm our support for the Secretary-General's Mechanism for Investigation of Alleged Use of Chemical and Biological Weapons. We remain staunch supporters of the work of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and its Technical Secretariat in investigating the worrisome chemical attacks that have been perpetrated throughout the world. As participants in the International Partnership Against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons, we are committed to ensuring accountability for the perpetrators.

Finally, but no less important, there are equally relevant international instruments in the field of conventional weapons that we also need to enforce and reinforce. The Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons is one such instrument. We actively look forward to the convening of the sixth Review Conference of the Parties to the Convention and hope that its High Contracting Parties achieve a successful outcome. In particular, we welcome the work of the Group of Governmental Experts on Emerging Technologies in the Area of Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems and hope to see a set of solid consensual recommendations regarding the development of a normative and operational framework on that matter. We also urgently call for the full and universal implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty and call on all remaining States to sign and ratify it.

Mr. Ruiz Díaz (Paraguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): As part of the first densely populated region to be declared a nuclear-weapon-free zone, under the Treaty of Tlatelolco, Paraguay once again reaffirms its unwavering commitment to strengthening the disarmament and non-proliferation regime and to supporting the initiatives under way within the United Nations to that end. Our country advocates transparent, irreversible, verifiable and legally binding nuclear disarmament for all States and supports the universalization and fulfilment of commitments made on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

In that connection, we welcome the efforts that have been made to align the international disarmament agenda, which will enable the convening, within the first quarter of the coming year, of both the tenth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the first meeting of States parties to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. We also reaffirm Paraguay's commitment to actively participating in discussions with other States, civil society organizations and international bodies, and we encourage other Member States to keep up the momentum and to continue to prepare for both of those international meetings.

Paraguay recognizes the importance of the peaceful use of nuclear energy through the implementation of programmes developed in line with international standards. We believe that States carrying out such programmes should do so based on best practices of cooperation and damage prevention and apply due diligence, as well as uphold the environmental

responsibility that those programmes entail. In that regard, we highlight the role played by the International Atomic Energy Agency, in particular in matters relating to technical cooperation and the transfer of technology for peaceful purposes. As a testament to our commitment, we were pleased to assume, for the first time, the vice-presidency of the General Conference of the Agency at its sixty-fifth session, which was held in Vienna.

Paraguay adheres to the principles guiding the exploration and use of outer space for peaceful purposes, to the benefit of humankind; condemns the use and threat of the use of force in international relations; strives for the prevention of an arms race in space; and underscores the need to establish an appropriate legal regime that guarantees the aspirations of all members of the international community for that common heritage.

The illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, including, of course, that of their ammunition, parts and components, constitutes a threat to our societies, irrespective of whether or not that contemptible scourge takes place in conflict zones. It negatively affects women and children and creates fertile breeding ground for other transnational crimes such as human and drug trafficking.

That is why, after having been postponed for a year, we welcome the outcome of the seventh Biennial Meeting of States to Consider 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, as well as the convening of the seventh Conference of States Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty. We also wish to highlight the efforts and actions undertaken in our Southern Common Market region.

As we have seen, international and regional cooperation are vitally important in combating and confronting the scourges we face, not only through capacity-building and the transfer of best practices and technologies but also in the implementation of common policies, strategies and programmes. We therefore call for the continued promotion of international and regional cooperation in this area.

Ms. Chan Valverde (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): Less than a quarter of the statements made in the First Committee have been delivered by women. During the most recent high-level plenary meeting to commemorate and promote the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons, only one out

of every six speakers was a woman. Despite that small proportion, some of us did not even have an opportunity to take the floor.

It is crucial to address the underrepresentation of women and other patterns of marginalization regarding their participation in these forums, along with other objectives, such as ensuring the participation of victims and survivors who have been directly affected by the trade in, and proliferation of, weapons, as well as the full consideration of their humanitarian consequences. Empowering women and increasing their participation remain among the most effective tools for advancing international peace and security.

Nuclear disarmament is a women's issue. Costa Rica also advocates a feminist approach to nuclear disarmament that challenges the archaic assumption that competition for power is the only way to conduct international relations and guarantee security. Many of the most serious threats to human security — from pandemics and food and water insecurity to climate change — do not recognize the artificial constructs of borders and cannot be effectively mitigated through unilateral action.

In that regard, the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) highlights certain ways in which we can bring about a more inclusive and secure future for all. But that future will be possible only when the nuclear-weapon States cease the expansion and modernization of their nuclear arsenals and when reductions to those arsenals are verifiable, transparent and carried out under the watchful eye of the International Atomic Energy Agency. That future will be possible only when the nuclear-weapon States comply with all of their obligations under relevant treaties, and not merely some of them. That future will be secured only when States decide to honour Articles 10 and 26 of the Charter of the United Nations, compliance with which Costa Rica has advocated for several decades.

The threat of nuclear weapons is real. Costa Rica is gravely concerned about the increase in spending on nuclear devices and the escalation of tensions between certain nuclear-weapon States, as well as the risk of a self-fulfilling prophecy if each State takes increasingly hostile measures in response to the actions of the other. Costa Rica calls on States to co-sponsor and vote in favour of draft resolution A/C.1/76/L.17, on the TPNW, and draft resolution A/C.1/76/L.11, on the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons.

Costa Rica welcomes the progress made on gender issues at the seventh Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the 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. The joint statement of 64 Member States is a clear signal that small arms and light weapons are a gender issue, and gender is a small arms and light weapons issue. However, despite the unequivocal progress that such language reflects, it needs to be translated into concrete action. In that regard, Costa Rica reiterates the importance of implementing the commitments made at the seventh Biennial Meeting of States and the third Review Conference of the Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons with respect to addressing gender issues, incorporating ammunition into the scope of the Programme of Action and addressing the risk of the diversion of arms and their ammunition through both the Programme of Action and the Arms Trade Treaty.

The diversion of conventional weapons is a major international security concern. The global arms trade continues to operate largely in the shadows and lacks sufficient regulation to minimize the risks. All arms exporters must ensure that arms-transfer control policies are responsible, transparent and accountable. We remind States parties to the Arms Trade Treaty that compliance with its articles 6 and 7 is not optional but mandatory.

Ms. Quintero Correa (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): The catastrophic humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons, the existence of more than 13,000 weapons of that type, with more than 3,800 deployed in operational forces, as well as the programmes that are in place to upgrade and modernize those weapons, their means of delivery and production facilities, require that we make progress towards the adoption of urgent and effective measures for their total elimination. We rely on the willingness of all States to work in that direction. We therefore welcome the formal extension of the New START Treaty, as well as the affirmation of the principle that a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought.

The upcoming Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is an opportunity to reaffirm previous commitments and reiterate the determination to work collectively for the achievement of general and complete disarmament under strict and effective

international control. We must make progress on the full implementation of the Treaty and its three fundamental pillars.

Colombia has concluded a Safeguards Agreement and Additional Protocol with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). We underscore that the establishment of safeguards is a legal commitment under the NPT and stress the importance of complying with them. We stress the role played by the IAEA in promoting the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, verification and security. As a new member of the IAEA Board of Governors, Colombia will seek to strengthen the Agency's Technical Cooperation Programme, thereby expanding its scope and contribution to the fulfilment of the Sustainable Development Goals, while at the same time promoting greater involvement by women in the area of nuclear science and technology.

We emphasize the importance of the Chemical Weapons Convention and condemn the use of such weapons by any actor under any circumstances. We consider the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons to be the competent forum for discussing incidents involving such weapons. We should support its strengthening. We also wish to highlight the importance of the Biological Weapons Convention. We advocate that progress be made at its forthcoming meetings on viable measures to establish a science and technology review mechanism and on the codes of conduct, which would contribute to a preventive approach in which the concepts of biosafety and biosecurity take on particular relevance.

We share the concerns of others regarding a potential arms race in outer space. We must guarantee its use for exclusively peaceful purposes and strengthen dialogue, transparency and confidence-building measures.

The illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, ammunition and explosives continues to be one of the collective threats with the greatest impact. It is essential that we address the current and emerging challenges, integrate efforts to implement the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects with those aimed achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and promote the effective participation of women and the collaboration of civil society.

We welcome the success of the seventh Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the 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. We fully endorse its outcome document (A/CONF.192/BMS/2021/1, annex) and hope to work together with all States to strengthen the Programme of Action and its International Tracing Instrument. We wish to reaffirm that Colombia considers ammunition to be part of the global issue of the illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons and that the provisions of the Programme of Action should apply to it as well. As co-sponsors of draft resolution A/C.1/76/L.43, entitled "The illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects", we call on all States to support it.

We welcome the adoption by consensus of the report of the Group of Governmental Experts on Problems Arising from the Accumulation of Conventional Ammunition Stockpiles in Surplus (see A/76/324) and welcome its recommendations. We believe they are constructive elements for discussion and subsequent action on the issue of ammunition in a comprehensive manner, including its entire life-cycle and management. In that regard, we underscore the fundamental role of international assistance and cooperation in addressing the challenges posed by that issue.

We must continue to work towards the common goal of a world free of anti-personnel mines. Based on that conviction, Colombia hopes to continue to support the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction by presiding over its twentieth Meeting of States Parties, promoting the implementation of the Oslo action plan and working to ensure that the current obstacles to the full implementation of the Convention can be resolved jointly by all States parties.

Moreover, given the dizzyingly rapid development of artificial intelligence and other technologies that are being used to design and develop new types of weapons, we recall the importance of advancing regulation in that area. We reiterate the primacy of international law in general and international humanitarian law in particular. However, the regulatory vacuum increases the vulnerability of the civilian population and the risk of criminal actors gaining access to those technologies.

Finally, we wish to reiterate the importance of safeguarding legal instruments in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation —

The Acting Chair: I am sorry, the representative of Colombia is out of time.

Ms. Squeff (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): Argentina has a clear and sustained commitment to disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation. For Argentina, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons continues to be the cornerstone of the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime. The forthcoming Review Conference of States Parties to the Treaty, which will be presided over by my country, is an ideal opportunity to reaffirm our commitment to its three pillars and to deliver concrete results, especially with respect to disarmament commitments.

Argentina believes that the use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere and under any circumstances is unacceptable and constitutes a flagrant violation of international obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention and international law. All those responsible for the use of such weapons must be brought to justice. We should endeavour to act while maintaining unity of purpose and averting political divisions that would be conducive to the weakening of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons.

Our country also reaffirms the fundamental importance of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction and renews its commitment to continuing to cooperate actively and constructively in order to make progress towards realizing the objectives of the full implementation and universalization of the Convention.

Argentina acknowledges the common interest of all humankind and the sovereign right of every State to participate in the exploration and use of outer space exclusively for peaceful purposes. Argentina therefore believes that preventing an arms race in outer space would avert a grave threat to international peace and security. The 1967 Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies, constitutes the cornerstone of the international legal regime for space. However, its scope is limited, as it prohibits only the placement in orbit of weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons, but not conventional weapons, and even less instruments or practices that can be used as weapons.

Argentina therefore believes it necessary to negotiate, within the framework of the Conference on Disarmament, a legally binding instrument on the prevention of an arms race in outer space. Until that is achieved, the adoption of international transparency and confidence-building measures in outer-space activities is unequivocally appropriate and necessary.

Mr. Kim Sunghoon (Republic of Korea): The full version of my statement will be made available on the eStatements portal.

A world free of nuclear weapons is an aspiration embraced by all humankind. Nevertheless, that goal is proving to be elusive and overwhelming, as demonstrated by the fact that the international security environment has not been proceeding in a positive way in recent years. This year, however, we have witnessed a number of encouraging developments. The extension of the New START Treaty and the launching of the strategic stability dialogue between the United States and Russia are cause for optimism.

At the same time, we all know that our ultimate aspiration cannot be attained without engaging in multilateral efforts. Upholding the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) as the cornerstone of our efforts would be a good place to start. The upcoming tenth Review Conference of the Parties to the NPT will be a crucial occasion to reaffirm our strong commitment to the Treaty. The Republic of Korea believes that particular consideration should be given to the following elements in that regard.

First, there should be emphasis on deepening a shared understanding and nurturing trust between the nuclear- and non-nuclear-weapon States and among the nuclear-weapon States. We support pragmatic approaches, such as the Stockholm Initiative on Nuclear Disarmament, the Creating an Environment for Nuclear Disarmament initiative and the International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification.

Secondly, several long-overdue issues, including the early commencement of negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty and the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, should warrant our full attention. We call for prompt action in that regard.

The Republic of Korea reiterates the significance of the Conventions on chemical and biological weapons. We emphasize our unfaltering support for the

Syria-related mechanisms at the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and urge the Syrian Arab Republic to take necessary actions, as called for by the Conference of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention.

The use of a Novichok nerve agent in the poisoning of Alexei Navalny remains a matter of grave concern as well. We encourage the Russian Federation, on whose territory the attack took place, to fully cooperate with the Technical Secretariat in order to disclose the circumstances surrounding the incident in full.

Given the risks emanating from the coronavirus disease pandemic, my delegation hopes that we can, and believes that we should, focus on strengthening the Biological Weapons Convention in order to make the regime more resilient, useful and practical and to keep it up to date. The Republic of Korea hopes to build on areas of convergence at the upcoming Meeting of States Parties to the Convention, which is scheduled to take place in November. Our contribution of \$1 million to the Zoonotic Disease Integrated Action initiative of the International Atomic Energy Agency is one that we are making to help counter future biological pandemics.

Ensuring a safe, secure and sustainable space environment has emerged as a matter of shared interest. Resolution 75/36, on responsible behaviours in space, seeks to enable us to navigate a secure outer space by reducing space threats. The Republic of Korea fully supports that resolution. My country also welcomes the efforts made by the Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) on the Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space in 2018-2019, as well as the 2013 report of the Group of Governmental Experts on Transparency and Confidence-Building Measures in Outer Space Activities (see A/68/189).

We reiterate the important contribution of the Arms Trade Treaty and welcome the successful convening of the seventh Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the 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. We also remain committed to the framework of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and expect the collective efforts being made through the GGE process to continue within that framework.

We will continue to work closely with the international community on landmine issues, including by participating as an observer in the nineteenth

Meeting of the States Parties to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, as well as by continuing to make contributions to the United Nations and relevant trust funds.

The denuclearization of the Korean peninsula remains one of the key issues in the field of international peace and security. The Korean peninsula peace process is our enduring commitment to achieving complete denuclearization and establishing permanent peace in our part of the world.

My Government is unwavering in its resolve to advance the peace process, and we ask North Korea to respond to our call for the resumption of dialogue. The continuing support and encouragement of the international community would be most deeply appreciated in that regard.

Mr. Knyazyan (Armenia): The full version of this statement will be circulated in writing.

Conventional arms control and confidence- and security-building measures are at the core of the regional security architecture and the concept of comprehensive and cooperative security. They remain key instruments for ensuring military stability, transparency and predictability by reducing the risk of conflict or the escalation of tensions.

The Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) is one of the cornerstones of détente in Europe, having played a significant role in the history of the European security architecture. The CFE Treaty was signed by countries with the aim of replacing military confrontation with a new pattern of security relations based on peaceful cooperation, and thereby contribute to overcoming the divisions in Europe. Another declared objective of the Treaty was the establishment of a secure and stable balance of conventional armed forces in Europe and the elimination of the capability to launch surprise attacks or initiate large-scale offensive action in Europe. Those objectives, which were set out almost 30 years ago, continue to be relevant and timely.

The essence of both the CFE Treaty and the Vienna Document seeks to exclude conventional warfare as a means of foreign policy by advocating military transparency and predictability. Those important tools were designed for all-weather implementation. Armenia is fully committed to the CFE Treaty and the Vienna Document and fully compliant with its

commitments on arms limitations, on-site inspections and information exchange.

Regrettably, the arms-control regime and confidence- and security-building measures continue to deteriorate, and the need to reverse that process has become imperative. A lack of military transparency, military build-up in violation of treaty limitations and the exclusion of armed forces from verification regimes can undermine security and stability and lead to the use of force and grave violations of human rights and international humanitarian law.

Armenia has consistently expressed its concerns regarding the systematic violations of the conventional arms-control regime by Azerbaijan. The destabilizing and unabated accumulation of armaments in violation of the CFE Treaty, the significant exceeding of the Treaty's ceilings and the exclusion of a large portion of armed forces from the verification regime and the absence of preconditions for receiving inspections all serve to undermine security in our region.

All of those violations, which were accompanied by open threats to use force, military provocation and the rejection of proposals on confidence- and security-building measures, in the context of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, were nothing short of preparations for a large-scale war. The absence of an adequate reaction from the international community to the breaches of the core provisions of the CFE Treaty and the Vienna Document by Azerbaijan served as a signal of encouragement for that country to resort to the use of force.

The premeditated and well-prepared aggression unleashed by Azerbaijan in Nagorno-Karabakh on 27 September 2020, including with the involvement of foreign terrorist fighters and mercenaries, confirmed the relevance of the concerns raised by Armenia. From the onset of hostilities, Azerbaijan widely used all types of heavy weaponry, including multiple-launch rocket systems, missiles, various types of unmanned aerial vehicles and military aircraft, and prohibited weapons, such as cluster munitions and incendiary weapons, to conduct targeted attacks on the civilian population and infrastructure, including schools and hospitals, in gross violation of international humanitarian law. The indiscriminate attacks of the Azerbaijani armed forces using banned cluster munitions to target residential areas and critical civilian infrastructure was verified by members of Human Rights Watch on the ground.

The strong and unequivocal response of the international community to the systemic and flagrant violations of legally binding international obligations and commitments, destabilizing military build-up and use of prohibited weaponry to commit gross human rights violations and atrocity crimes is crucial to ensuring accountability for non-compliance and subsequent criminal actions. Military posturing, warmongering and the use of force as a means of conflict resolution and imposing unilateral solutions should be resolutely and unequivocally condemned.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate Armenia's commitment to contributing to the strengthening of conventional arms control and confidence- and security-building measures at the global and regional levels.

Mr. Gusman (Azerbaijan): Azerbaijan shares the concern of the international community that the proliferation of nuclear weapons poses an existential threat to international peace and security and supports all efforts to achieve nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation.

In pursuit of those efforts, Azerbaijan works closely with the International Atomic Energy Agency, whose role in developing nuclear security regulations and standards we recognize and commend. Moreover, Azerbaijan signed and ratified the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty in 1999. We note that it is one of the most crucial instruments in strengthening the non-proliferation regime and limiting nuclear armaments, and we support efforts to establish a viable and effective verification architecture for nuclear tests.

Owing to nuclear proliferation challenges in our geographic location, Azerbaijan attaches particular importance to the prevention of the use of our territory as a transit route for nuclear trafficking. In close cooperation with partners, we have established a strong export-control system. We are committed to continuing to cooperate with international organizations and our partners in order to strengthen nuclear security in the region and around the world, while reducing the threats emanating from illicit trafficking in nuclear and radioactive materials.

Azerbaijan believes that the elimination of all types of weapons of mass destruction, in accordance with obligations under existing non-proliferation regimes, and the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones in remaining regions are a prerequisite for strengthening international security and confidence worldwide. In that

context, we strongly support the initiative to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East.

As a reliable member of the international community, Azerbaijan fully abides by its commitments under the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological Weapons Convention and strongly condemns any use of those types of weapons, as well as their development, production or stockpiling. Azerbaijan also supports the goals, purposes and principles of the Ottawa Convention and considers the full banning and destruction of anti-personnel landmines to be an important humanitarian objective that will reduce civilian casualties.

The excessive and destabilizing accumulation and proliferation of small arms and light weapons and stockpiles of conventional ammunition continues to be a threat to security and stability, as well as to the safety of civilians. The full implementation of commitments pursuant to relevant international documents and the application of practical steps in that regard are necessary to tackle those threats. We believe that the work of relevant regional organizations should complement United Nations-led international efforts in that sphere, including through 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. We also note that the prevention of the illicit transfer and diversion of small arms and light weapons and stockpiles of conventional ammunition could be an important element for rehabilitation, reintegration and peacebuilding in post-conflict contexts.

From our regional perspective, we must stress our deep concern about, and strong condemnation of, the extensive use by Armenia of massively destructive methods of warfare and weapons prohibited under international law and international humanitarian law, such as cluster munitions and white phosphorus projectiles, which were used during the course of armed hostilities between September and November last year. Even more egregious were the repeated missile strikes launched from the territory of Armenia into residential areas of Azerbaijan, which resulted in horrific casualties among the civilian population, including among children, and the massive destruction of property. Those facts have been well-established by the national authorities of Azerbaijan, as well as international actors, and confirmed in several reports submitted by

international non-governmental organizations, such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International.

Furthermore, Armenia's refusal to release maps of the minefields that it planted during the occupation, in particular prior to its military withdrawal, has already claimed the lives of 30 Azerbaijani citizens and threatens to kill even more. That situation also prevents nearly 1 million Azerbaijani internally displaced persons from exercising their inalienable right to return in safety and dignity. We urge the international community not to ignore that ongoing humanitarian crisis, and we call on Armenia to immediately release all minefield maps.

Ms. Benn (Guyana): My delegation joins others in congratulating the Chair of the First Committee and the other members of the Bureau on their elections to lead the Committee during its seventy-sixth session. We are confident that the Bureau will ably lead the Committee in discharging its mandate, and we assure members of our full support and cooperation.

Guyana aligns itself with the statements delivered by the representatives of Trinidad and Tobago, on behalf of the Caribbean Community, and Indonesia, on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/76/PV.7).

Guyana joins others in calling for the total elimination of nuclear weapons, in line with the three pillars of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), namely, disarmament, non-proliferation and guarantees on the peaceful use of nuclear energy. We share the deep concern expressed by an overwhelming majority of Member States during this thematic debate regarding the continuing existence of nuclear weapons. Fifty-one years after the entry into force of the NPT, the world still has more than 10,000 nuclear warheads. My delegation acknowledges the significant progress made on nuclear disarmament since the adoption of the NPT and subsequent instruments but remains concerned that reliance on nuclear weapons in defence and security policies will continue to limit progress in reducing stockpiles.

Guyana remains firm in its conviction that nuclear weapons have no utility in today's world and that their continuing existence runs contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations. Nuclear weapons are not useful deterrents, but rather cultivate a state of insecurity and false defensiveness that only increases the chances of proliferation. The catastrophic humanitarian and environmental consequences of the

use of such weapons are guaranteed to affect all of us, irrespective of our involvement in, or distance from, the conflict.

Guyana therefore reiterates its call for a world free of nuclear weapons in the best interest of all humankind and urges all States parties to promptly implement their obligations under the NPT without further delay and to take positive measures to ensure the convening of the tenth Review Conference of the Parties to the NPT in a manner that contributes to a successful outcome.

The illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects continues to threaten peace, safety, security and stability and has devastating impacts on socioeconomic development, human rights and human development, including health and mortality, knowledge and education, income and standard of living. The soaring rates of gun-related violence and the prevalence of gun-related fatalities owing to the proliferation of illegal arms and ammunition, illicit drugs, money laundering, cybercrime and other dimensions of transboundary criminal activities pose a direct and significant threat to the security of countries in our region.

As we observe the twentieth anniversary 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 this year, Guyana renews its call for the full and effective implementation of the Programme of Action and the International Tracing Instrument at the national, regional and global levels. Only through the effective implementation of those instruments can we truly achieve progress in preventing, combating and eradicating the misuse, diversion and illegal international transfer of small arms and light weapons. In that spirit, we welcome the decision reached at the seventh Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action to establish a dedicated fellowship training programme on small arms and light weapons, in particular for developing countries.

In conclusion, my delegation appeals to all stakeholders to preserve the spirit exhibited during the negotiation and adoption of the global instruments I mentioned and to continue to deliver progress in their implementation.

The Acting Chair: I now give the floor to the Permanent Observer of the Observer State of the Holy See.

Archbishop Caccia (Holy See): In discussing the themes that provide context to the importance of the work of the First Committee, Pope Francis said:

“Let us not remain mired in theoretical discussions but touch the wounded flesh of the victims. Let us look once more at all those civilians whose killing was considered ‘collateral damage’ ... Let us think of the refugees and displaced, those who suffered the effects of atomic radiation or chemical attacks”.

With regard to the latter of those groups of victims, recent reports regarding the use of nerve agents in various places around the world point to the continuing relevance of instruments prohibiting their use and possession. The Geneva Protocol, the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention and the Chemical Weapons Convention should provide a complete shield against such weapons. The ongoing coronavirus disease pandemic is a stark and painful reminder of the crippling impact that can be caused by novel biological agents, even those of natural genesis. We should also not lose sight of the threat posed by so-called dirty bombs or the need for measures to be established that prohibit the use of radiological materials as weapons.

Many delegations have lauded the five-year extension of the New START Treaty between the Russian Federation and the United States. My delegation also looks forward to rapid progress being made in the strategic stability dialogue, which has already been convened twice, to consider further reductions in nuclear weapons, both strategic and non-strategic, and the relevance of new technologies.

As the postponed fiftieth-anniversary Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons seems likely to take place in January next year, it is important that the other major nuclear-weapon States jointly consider and agree upon steps that would complement those taken by the Russian Federation and the United States. It is time that nuclear-weapons stockpiles be definitively capped. Our world is so interconnected that all nuclear weapons, wherever they may be, must be eliminated in the shortest possible time, lest accident or miscalculation lead to catastrophic humanitarian and environmental consequences.

The use of atomic energy for purposes of war is immoral, as is the possession of nuclear weapons, given that the intrinsic intention of possessing such weapons is the threat of their use. In that regard, the Treaty

on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons established a legal prohibition on nuclear-weapon possession and will, in due course, provide a basis for the nuclear-weapon-possessing States to become parties to the Treaty upon eliminating their nuclear programmes.

The First Committee needs to redouble its efforts to provide pathways to agreements that will reduce the reliance on any conventional weapons to resolve disputes. Those efforts will not only make nuclear disarmament more feasible, but also moderate the interactions among States in their ongoing relations. Determined as we are to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, we cannot allow ourselves to be spectators to violence and war, to brothers killing brothers, as though watching games from a safe distance. The growing threat of the use of armed drones and lethal autonomous weapon systems underscores the urgency of addressing the ethical necessity to preserve human responsibility.

In conclusion, the Holy See wishes to state its conviction that outer space should remain the peaceful domain that it has been hitherto in human history. Existing restrictions on the military uses of outer space, as embodied in the Outer Space Treaty, must be extended.

The full text of this statement will be uploaded to the eStatements portal.

The Acting Chair: We have heard from last speaker for today's thematic discussion.

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

Mr. Vorontsov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We would like to respond to a number of brazen and unfounded accusations made against the Russian Federation.

In response to the remarks made by the Lithuanian delegation (see A/C.1/76/PV.8), we wish to recall that we briefed our partners on the West-2021 military exercise in advance through the Ministries of Defence of Russia and Belarus in Moscow and Minsk, respectively, as well as at the Forum for Security Cooperation in Vienna. We also published detailed information as to the parameters of our manoeuvres in the media and invited accredited military diplomats to Moscow as observers.

We therefore did everything necessary to ensure full transparency. The maximum number of personnel under a single operational command on the territory of Russia that took part in the military exercises did not exceed 6,400 people, which is significantly lower than the number provided for in the 2011 Vienna Document with regard to the thresholds for notifiable military activities. Nevertheless, we provided the necessary information in good faith regarding those activities.

With respect to the unsubstantiated remarks made by the delegation of Ukraine regarding the so-called militarization of Crimea (see A/C.1/76/PV.8), we wish to recall that the question of which country the peninsula and the city of Sevastopol belongs to was resolved in 2014 by their residents. The Republic of Crimea and Sevastopol, a city of federal significance, are an integral part of the Russian Federation. That is not up for debate or subject to review. Russia is a sovereign State and has the right to conduct exercises, deploy objects there and announce conscription for its citizens on its territory. As for the military activities being conducted in Crimea and in the adjacent Azov-Black Sea region, like elsewhere in the Russian Federation, they are being carried out based on the principle of defence-sufficiency and aimed exclusively at protecting the territorial integrity of the country and its citizens living there.

Any accusations of Russia having violated its obligations under the Budapest Memorandum of 5 December 1994 in relation to the developments in this country are completely groundless. A drastic and catastrophic transformation of the political system of Ukraine was prompted by internal political and socioeconomic processes in the country. Russia had no involvement in that transformation or its disastrous repercussions, which had deleterious consequences for the Ukrainian people.

Turning to the ongoing attempts to attribute the events in south-eastern Ukraine to the Russian military, we have not seen a single piece of compelling evidence pertaining to the presence of Russian troops on Ukrainian territory — simply because they are not and have never been deployed there. I emphasize once again that the events in south-eastern Ukraine are part of an internal conflict. We call on our Ukrainian colleagues to strictly and fully comply with their own obligations. The key to resolving the internal Ukrainian conflict is through direct constructive dialogue between Kyiv and the representatives of Donetsk and

Luhansk in the Trilateral Contact Group and the prompt implementation of a package of measures endorsed by the Security Council in resolution 2202 (2015), of 12 February 2015, as well as the Minsk agreements achieved within the framework the Normandy format.

The attempts of the Ukrainian delegation to blame the Russian Federation for having incited a biological security crisis in the country are also cynical. We would urge our Ukrainian colleagues to look beyond external factors in seeking to identify the cause of the current situation and to focus instead on reforming the country's health-care system, which has been completely destroyed. That is not our assessment but rather a direct quote from the former Minister of Health of Ukraine, Mr. Maksym Stepanov.

Mr. Tozik (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): In exercise of the right of reply, we would like to respond to the remarks made by the delegation of Lithuania (see A/C.1/76/PV.8) in relation to the West-2021 joint Russian-Belarusian military exercises conducted in Belarus in September.

Belarus and Russia demonstrated a responsible and transparent approach in carrying out those exercises, which were exclusively defence-oriented and did not pose any threat to neighbouring States. The Ministry of Defence of Belarus provided information on the parameters of the exercises to all States members of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and in accordance with the provisions of the 2011 Vienna Document. We get the impression that the Lithuanian delegation is either unaware of the facts or is simply denying what is patently clear. As early as July and August, Belarus convened a series of briefings in Minsk and Vienna to provide comprehensive and detailed information about the exercises.

We have repeatedly stressed the defensive nature of the activities. In a spirit of openness and goodwill and based on the principle of reciprocity, we invited observers from a number of States and international organizations, including the OSCE. However, the parameters and scale of the exercises did not reach the threshold for mandatory observation, as set forth in the requirements of the Vienna Document. We demonstrated openness and will continue to be open. Of course, we will be as open as our Western neighbours are prepared to be. The principle of reciprocity cannot be denied by anyone. Throughout the military exercise, the activities were widely covered in the media and

a number of open statements were made, so there is nothing to blame us for.

We also wish to recall that a significant number of military exercises are being conducted by some OSCE States, including in the immediate vicinity of our borders, and not all of them are transparent for the Republic of Belarus. However, we calmly observe those activities and respond appropriately, without undue commotion or hysteria, and we call on our colleagues to conduct themselves in the same manner, including in the meetings of the First Committee. We all have important work to do in the Committee and should refrain from wasting time by levelling unfounded and irrelevant accusations.

Mr. Knyazyan (Armenia): I take the floor in exercise of the right of reply to respond to the remarks made by the delegation of Azerbaijan.

During the general debate segment of our work, I had an opportunity to reflect on the groundless distortions of the Azerbaijani delegation with regard to last year's large-scale escalation in our region — the largest in the time of the pandemic — which was unleashed by Azerbaijan (see A/C.1/76/PV.3 and (A/C.1/76/PV.5). I will therefore limit my statement to two short remarks within the framework of our thematic discussion.

First, we note that the delegation of Azerbaijan was totally silent on its non-compliance with its legally binding obligations and political commitments under the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe and the 2011 Vienna Document.

Secondly, the representative of Azerbaijan referred to the topic of mines. I would like to stress that, for almost three decades, the people of Nagorno-Karabakh and in the border communities of Armenia have been severely affected by massive mine contamination as a result of the military activities of Azerbaijan. Mine accidents have led to killing, maiming and injuring many civilians, including children, and have significantly impeded their socioeconomic development. For three decades, Azerbaijan has consistently obstructed all demining activities as part of its wider policy of denying the international community humanitarian access to Nagorno-Karabakh.

The remarks made by the delegation of Azerbaijan are a case in point of the country's continuing politicization of humanitarian issues.

Mr. Zlenko (Ukraine): I take the floor to exercise Ukraine's right of reply in response to the statement made by the delegation of the Russian Federation (see A/C.1/76/PV.8).

I would like to recall that, as we have emphasized at previous meetings, the Russian Federation has been recognized by the United Nations — specifically, by General Assembly, the most representative organ of the Organization — loud and clear as an occupying Power in Ukraine, and by extension as a side to the conflict. What does that mean? It means that, as an occupying Power and side to the conflict, it has neither a legal nor a moral right to pronounce itself over Ukraine, at least not until Russia returns Crimea to Ukraine, withdraws from the Donbas region and pays in full for its aggression.

I would now like to very briefly describe the current security landscape in Crimea and in the east of Ukraine, in response to the Russian delegation's statement regarding its activities in Crimea. In occupying the Crimean peninsula and transforming it into a powerful military base, the Russian Federation has violated the fundamental norms and principles of international law and, above all, the Charter of the United Nations. The territory of Crimea continues to host a disproportionate number of weapon systems, including nuclear-capable missiles, aircraft, ships, ammunition and military personnel, with the latter having increased in number to 32,500, and even 44,000 in April, at a time of unjustified and threatening accumulation of Russian troops at our borders.

The progressive militarization of Crimea by Russia has led to the erosion of the current verification and conventional arms-control regimes in the Euro-Atlantic region. What is also alarming is that Crimea remains inaccessible for any verification or inspection under current arms-control agreements and regimes, such as the Vienna Document, the Treaty on Open Skies and the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe. Moreover, Russia's ongoing armed aggression against Ukraine includes a large-scale concentration of Russian troops attacking equipment near Ukraine's borders in 2020 and 2021, as well as intensive snap exercises on the temporarily occupied territory of Ukraine, thereby destabilizing the military and political situation in Europe.

Ukraine is interested in restoring military transparency and predictability, as well as regional

stability and mutual international confidence. To achieve those goals, Ukraine will support all efforts of the international community aimed at bringing about Russia's return to the international legal field and multilateral conventional arms-control mechanisms so that it rediscovers its lost ability to comply with its international legal obligations. Russia should also immediately withdraw its troops from occupied Crimea, as well as from certain occupied areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions.

Let me also remind the Russian Federation about the Budapest Memorandum on Security Assurances, which it continues to ignore. For instance, the first paragraph of the Memorandum reads as follows:

"The United States of America, the Russian Federation and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland reaffirm their commitment to Ukraine, in accordance with the principles of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe Final Act, to respect the independence and sovereignty and the existing borders of Ukraine".

The second paragraph reads:

"The United States of America, the Russian Federation and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland reaffirm their obligation to refrain from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of Ukraine, and that none of their weapons will ever be used against Ukraine".

Therefore, as we can see from the text, the Russian Federation completely violated the Budapest Memorandum, the Charter of the United Nations and other norms and principles of international law when it invaded Crimea and certain areas of Donetsk and Luhansk —

The Acting Chair: I am sorry, the representative of Ukraine is out of time.

Mr. Kim In Chol (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): My delegation is compelled to take the floor in exercise of the right of reply in response to the statements made by a few European countries and South Korea. My delegation categorically rejects the false accusations made by certain European countries — enough is enough. On this occasion, my delegation draws their sharp attention to the following points.

First, we have never acknowledged the biased and illegal resolutions that seriously encroach upon the right to existence and development of sovereign States. It is the inherent right of a sovereign State to increase its military capabilities for self-defence purposes, especially in the face of growing military threats from outside forces. Any demand that we renounce our right to self-defence is tantamount to the denial of our sovereignty.

Secondly, countries must boldly abandon their one-sided policy of hostility and double standards towards the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The rapid development of military technology and hardware is changing the aspect of military operations and the security landscape of States in every region of the world today. The military dangers facing our State caused by the military tensions prevailing on the Korean peninsula are different to those of 10, five or even three years ago. The root cause of the aggravated tensions on the Korean peninsula is the hostile policy of the United States towards the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, which is conspicuously marked by nuclear blackmail and threats being made against our country.

The United States threatens the Democratic People's Republic of Korea through military demonstrations of an intimidating nature, including by staging all sorts of war drills aimed at our country in and around the Korean peninsula and by deploying nuclear assets, such as nuclear-powered aircraft carriers and nuclear submarines, to South Korea and its surroundings more often than not. Given the increased military threats of the United States and South Korea against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, including an excessive arms build-up and joint military activities, nobody can deny the legitimate right to self-defence of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to develop, test, manufacture and possess weapons systems equivalent to those possessed or developed by those countries.

Recently, the United States has frequently signalled that it is not hostile to our State, but we have every reason not to believe it based on its actions. The United States continues to generate regional tension as a result of its flawed judgment and actions. All measures taken by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to boost its national-defence capabilities are righteous activities aimed at proactively responding to the security situation in and around the Korean peninsula and safeguarding the security of our State and people, all in the face of

a unilateral policy of hostility and double standards, which constitutes a double-edged sword that serves only to disrupt peace and security and escalate tensions on the Korean peninsula and the rest of the region.

European countries are well-advised to invest their time and energy into denuclearizing Europe in a complete, verifiable and irreversible manner and to call into question the move made by the United States to transfer nuclear technology to Australia. South Korea has recently been trying to upgrade its combat power, strongly backed by the United States, by introducing a large number of cutting-edge weapons of various kinds, including Stealth Joint Strike Fighters and high-altitude unmanned reconnaissance aircraft.

South Korea's inexhaustible and dangerous attempts to strengthen its military capability are disrupting the military balance in the region of the Korean peninsula and aggravating the military instability and dangers. All sorts of military drills and arms build-ups, under the pretext of containing the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, have become conspicuous in South Korea, whose periodic sinister rhetoric and behaviour are getting on our nerves.

It is imperative to ensure respect between our two countries and to renounce any double-dealing attitudes and hostile policies towards one another. It is important that the South Korean authorities change their confrontational attitude towards our Republic, maintain the standard of national independence and implement the inter-Korean declarations in good faith.

Mr. Gusman (Azerbaijan): Despite Azerbaijan's good-faith efforts to advance our region towards a post-conflict rehabilitation and reconstruction phase, we are compelled to refute the revanchist position of Armenia's delegation today. We have already outlined Armenia's non-compliance with regional arms-control and verification mechanisms and provided evidence of that non-compliance, as found in the occupied territories.

Particularly cynical are the accusations that Azerbaijan "politicizes the landmine issue". The truth is that many citizens in Azerbaijan are living under the constant threat of landmines planted by Armenia. That threat could easily be removed, and we call on Armenia to do so instead of engaging in pointless debates on that issue. Once again, we note that the remarks made by Armenia's representative directly contradict the text and spirit of the trilateral statement of 10 November

2020, and we call on the delegation of Armenia to finally abandon its destructive position.

Mr. Vorontsov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The question over which country Crimea belongs to was definitively determined by the Crimean people themselves via a referendum held in March 2014. Any discussions of the situation in this Russian region without participation of people who live there are divorced from reality. The Crimean issue should not be dealt with at the United Nations within the context of the internal Ukrainian issue, and neither should the situation surrounding the Sea of Azov and the Kerch Strait, both of which should be dealt with solely in the context of bilateral Russian-Ukrainian relations.

We condemn the attempts of the Ukrainian delegation to bring the issue of Crimea before the General Assembly through a politicized resolution on the militarization of some parts of the peninsula and the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov. This resolution is rooted in groundless and unacceptable accusations against Russia and designed to ascribe all of Ukraine's internal issues to mythical Russian aggression.

The only way to resolve the internal Ukrainian issue is the package of measures for the implementation of the Minsk agreements contained in Security Council resolution 2202 (2015). Effective international assistance, including through the United Nations, should be aimed at implementing that resolution and supporting the existing formats, including the Minsk Trilateral Contact Group and the Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

A sustainable political and diplomatic effort to tackle the internal crisis in Ukraine is impossible without first establishing direct dialogue between Kyiv and the Donbas region, taking into account, at the constitutional level, the legitimate demands of all regions of Ukraine.

We will continue to provide active assistance with a view to improving the acute humanitarian situation in the east of Ukraine, which has arisen purely through the fault of the authorities in Kyiv.

Mr. Knyazyan (Armenia): I take the floor to exercise our second right of reply in response to the delegation of Azerbaijan.

Armenia is committed to its obligations under the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe

(CFE). All the inspections to which Armenia has been subject under that Treaty and the Vienna Document have testified to Armenia's compliance. On the contrary, the grave violations committed by Azerbaijan are recorded by Azerbaijan itself. According to the official information provided by Azerbaijan, it exceeds its ceilings in four out of five categories of major conventional armaments, as established by the CFE Treaty. To highlight just one example, it has 972 artillery units, whereas the permitted ceiling stands at 285.

The official information provided by Azerbaijan refers to non-existent evidence. Fourteen of the 28 brigades of the Azerbaijani armed forces that have been located along the State border with Armenia and the line of contact with Nagorno-Karabakh for decades have been completely excluded from inspection and verification, thereby undermining the credibility of the data provided by Azerbaijan in the annual military information exchange and enabling that country to concentrate its large number of unverified forces and military equipment along the border of Nagorno-Karabakh, the result of which we saw last year when a major aggression was unleashed against that region.

To return to the topic of mine action and humanitarian issues, there is no reference to the topic of mines in the trilateral statement of 9 November 2020, but there is a provision concerning the immediate return of all prisoners of war and civilian hostages, which Azerbaijan has thus far failed to implement. Armenia supports a human-rights based, people-centred and inclusive approach when it comes to international cooperation in the humanitarian sphere, including in the field of mine action. Contrary to Armenia's approach, human rights are somewhat disregarded by Azerbaijan, which has always hindered humanitarian access to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict zone, as attested to by the United Nations itself.

Mr. Zlenko (Ukraine): I would like to exercise my second right of reply to respond to the remarks made by the delegation of the Russian Federation.

I would like to remind the representative of the Russian Federation that the issue of Crimea was closed before his country invaded, attempted to annex and occupied the peninsula. I would also like to add that, in the light of the grave human rights violations, ongoing large-scale militarization and other threats

arising from the temporary occupation of Crimea, on 23 August Ukraine and 43 other countries and the European Union established the international Crimea Platform, the main purpose of which is to bring about Russia's deoccupation of Crimea. The work of the Platform is geared towards a number of important matters, including the demilitarization of Crimea and preventing Russia from violating the human rights of the citizens of Crimea, including Crimean Tatars.

I also wish to recall that, when Russia invaded Crimea, it violated many of its obligations under various documents of the United Nations and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, as well as the Budapest Memorandum on Security Assurances.

Mr. Gusman (Azerbaijan): Once again, I will be brief. It is dismaying that, a year after the war, the level of hatred towards Azerbaijan in Armenia's society is at its highest yet, as reflected in the statements of Armenia's delegation today. It is disturbing that anyone who dares

to speak about reconciliation or peaceful coexistence with Azerbaijan is labelled a traitor in Armenia. My delegation would simply remind the representatives of Armenia that their country bears the full responsibility for the propagation of that hatemongering.

The Acting Chair: We have heard from the last speaker for this meeting.

I would like to acknowledge the Secretariat staff and the interpreters for their flexibility and cooperation.

Before adjourning, I would like to remind all delegations that the deadline for the submission of draft resolutions and draft decisions under all agenda items is tomorrow, Thursday, 14 October, at noon. The next meeting of the Committee will be held tomorrow afternoon in combined Conference Rooms 1, 2 and 3, when we will continue with the thematic discussion.

The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.