



# General Assembly

Seventy-seventh session

## First Committee

**17<sup>th</sup>** meeting

Friday, 21 October 2022, 10 a.m.  
New York

Official Records

*Chair:* Mr. Pieris .....(Sri Lanka)

*In the absence of the Chair, Mr. Roethlin (Austria),  
Vice-Chair, took the Chair.*

*The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.*

### Agenda items 90 to 108 (continued)

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

**The Acting Chair:** The Committee will now continue its thematic discussion under the cluster “Conventional weapons”.

**Mr. Kmentt** (Austria): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of 69 States: Albania, Argentina, Australia, Belgium, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Bulgaria, Canada, Colombia, Costa Rica, Chile, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Estonia, Fiji, Finland, France, Germany, Georgia, Greece, Guatemala, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kiribati, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Mexico, Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Namibia, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Peru, the Philippines, Portugal, the Republic of Korea, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, San Marino, Sierra Leone, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sri Lanka, the State of Palestine, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, the United States of America, Uruguay, Venezuela and my own country, Austria.

The research and development of new technologies is progressing at a rapid pace. New and emerging technologies hold great promise for the advancement of human welfare and could help to better protect civilians in conflict in certain circumstances. However, the introduction of new technological applications, such as those related to autonomy in weapon systems, also raises serious concerns from humanitarian, legal, security, technological and ethical perspectives. We therefore see an urgent need for the international community to further its understanding and address those risks and challenges by adopting appropriate rules and measures, such as principles, good practices, limitations and constraints. We are committed to upholding and strengthening compliance with international law, in particular international humanitarian law, including through maintaining human responsibility and accountability in the use of force.

Important work has been done and continues to be done under the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW), including the endorsement in 2019 of the 11 guiding principles that should, inter alia, continue to guide the work of the Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) on Emerging Technologies in the Area of Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems. We are also encouraged that proposals on possible measures and options were presented and discussed at the GGE. Although it has proven difficult to translate the progress made in the CCW's discussions into further concrete outcomes, the consideration of substantive proposals has facilitated the development of shared understandings and convergence on key substantive issues. That has included, in particular, the approach

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based on the prohibition of autonomous weapon systems that cannot be used in compliance with international humanitarian law and the regulation of other types of autonomous weapon systems. States may have different understandings about terms such as “human judgment”, “human control” and “human involvement”. However, there is also a recognition shared by many that the human element is and must remain central in the use of force.

Against that backdrop, we emphasize the necessity for human beings to exert appropriate control, judgment and involvement in relation to the use of weapons systems in order to ensure that any use is in compliance with international law, in particular international humanitarian law, and that humans remain accountable for decisions on the use of force. Going forward, we recognize the importance of focusing efforts in particular on elaborating the normative and operational framework relating to autonomous weapons where appropriate and necessary, including through internationally agreed rules and limits.

We also deem it important to further deepen our understanding of those issues. In that regard, we welcome the announcement of an international conference, to be hosted by the Netherlands, on the responsible military development, deployment and use of artificial intelligence and the announcement of a regional conference, to be hosted by Costa Rica, on the social and humanitarian impact of autonomous weapons. We also welcome the work carried out by the Secretary-General within the *Our Common Agenda* (A/75/982) initiative to develop an Agenda for Peace, which features lethal autonomous weapons systems as one of the core areas. We call on the Secretary-General to continue to proactively engage on that important issue, including by urging States to make progress towards an outcome at the GGE.

International organizations, the International Committee of the Red Cross, the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, civil society organizations and the tech community make important contributions to international discussions on how to address issues related to emerging technologies and autonomy in weapons systems, including on the ethical, human rights, societal and technological dimensions. Their participation greatly enhances our ongoing discussions. We urge the high-contracting parties to the CCW, together with all Member States, to intensify their consideration of those issues. We are committed to

strengthening efforts to address the issue of autonomy in weapon systems.

**Mr. Zlenko (Ukraine):** Today is day 239 of the full-scale invasion unleashed by terrorist Russia against Ukraine. The Russian forces continue to indiscriminately attack Ukraine’s peaceful cities and villages with the use of various types of conventional weapons. Russia’s army also actively uses explosive weapons with wide-area effects, including cluster munitions and thermobaric weapons, which cause civilian injuries and severe damage to civilian infrastructure, including residential buildings, schools, hospitals and other civilian objects.

Throughout the past few weeks, terrorist Russia has intensified its attacks against critical infrastructure and residential buildings. Dozens of people, including children, were killed or injured. A third of Ukraine’s energy infrastructure was affected. The buildings of two diplomatic missions in Kyiv were damaged. Russia is striking power stations, which have no military purpose, to deprive the civilian population of its basic needs — heat, electricity and water — amid the onset of cold temperatures. Russia will bear full responsibility for its atrocities against the people of Ukraine. I would also like to recall that providing weapons to wage a war of aggression in Ukraine and kill Ukrainian citizens makes Iran complicit in Russia’s crime of aggression, war crimes and terrorist acts against Ukraine.

Russia is actively using Iranian-made combat drones. Especially during the period from September to October, hundreds of Iranian kamikaze drones were launched to strike residential buildings, power stations, bridges, playgrounds and other civilian objects in Ukrainian cities. We therefore call on Iran to immediately stop supplying Russia with any weapons. Otherwise, Iran will bear responsibility in the strictest of terms, including within the framework of international legal proceedings addressing Russia’s crimes against Ukraine. Iran continues to claim that it maintains neutrality vis-à-vis the war and is not providing weapons to either side. However, the true facts on the ground contradict such claims. Ukraine will take all available measures to protect its civilian population, sovereignty and territorial integrity from external aggression, while exercising its inalienable right to self-defence in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations. Ukrainian defence forces have already successfully shot down 230 Shahed-136 drones, which Russia has slyly disguised as Geran-2.

Ukraine reiterates its full support for the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, the Ottawa Convention and the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. After Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the problem of mines and explosive remnants of war has become particularly acute, although Russia has been continuously spreading them over Ukrainian territory for the past eight years. The remnants of cluster munitions, bombs and anti-personnel mines, together with the explosive remnants of war, cause massive contamination and pose a long-lasting threat to civilians. While the entire civilized world is abandoning and banning anti-personnel landmines, Russia is increasing their use in Ukraine and even testing new types of anti-personnel mines, including POM-3 "Medallion" and other mines. While Russia retreats from the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine, its military personnel are setting booby traps that are banned by international law on a massive scale, even in food facilities, private residences and human corpses. The Russian occupiers' war crimes are being committed even against Ukrainian children. Invaders deliberately mine toys and shiny objects that attract children's attention. The members of Ukraine's armed forces, State emergency services and other agencies, who risk their lives on a daily basis, are carrying out demining operations in the liberated territories. However, the main work will begin after the complete withdrawal of Russian troops from Ukraine.

**The Acting Chair:** There are 48 speakers remaining on the list of speakers for this cluster. As delegations are aware, based on the current programme of work, the Committee should conclude its consideration of the cluster today. In that regard, I would like to refer to the decision of the Committee not to hold meetings on Monday, 24 October. Given the current backlog and the long list of speakers for the remaining four clusters, the Bureau of the First Committee would like to propose that the Committee meet next Monday, 24 October, in the morning and in the afternoon in order to begin hearing speakers on the clusters "Other disarmament measures and international security" and "Regional disarmament and security". Those two additional plenary meetings would enable the Committee to exhaust the list of speakers for the thematic discussions in a timely manner and keep to its schedule of beginning the action phase on Friday, 28 October.

May I take it that the Committee wishes to proceed accordingly and convene two plenary meetings on Monday, 24 October?

*It was decided.*

**The Acting Chair:** The Committee will now continue its thematic discussion on the cluster "Conventional weapons".

**Mr. Clutterbuck** (New Zealand): As the international community grapples with the implications of new and escalating conflicts, the highest level of nuclear risk since the end of the Cold War and the new security challenges in the space and cyber domains, it is important that we also remain focused on conventional weapons issues. As we have seen demonstrated by Russia's illegal and unjustified invasion of Ukraine, this year has witnessed many examples of the use of illegal weapons and the use of legal weapons in unlawful ways — many in flagrant violation of international humanitarian law. We have seen the use of anti-personnel landmines, cluster munitions and phosphorus munitions, as well as the targeting of civilians and civilian infrastructure. New Zealand condemns all such use and behaviour, and calls on all States that have yet to do so to sign up to and implement the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, the Convention on Cluster Munitions and the relevant Protocols to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons. Now is the time to shore up the important norms at the heart of those treaties, demonstrating our commitment to upholding international humanitarian law and strengthening the protection of civilians.

Given all the challenges we face, New Zealand is very pleased to have at least one area of progress to celebrate this year — namely, the conclusion of the Political Declaration on Strengthening the Protection of Civilians from the Humanitarian Consequences Arising from the Use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas. Led expertly by Ireland, the negotiation of that Declaration has been a long process, reflecting the experience that many States and civilian populations have had of urban warfare over a long period of time. Such experiences, which have been felt around the world and for many years, make a compelling case for the greater protection of civilians caught in the crossfire of urban warfare. New Zealand appreciates Ireland's strong leadership, the vision and commitment of an ever-growing group of States, and the tireless advocacy and welcome expertise of international

organizations and civil society groups, all of which have come together to create that significant document. We strongly support the Political Declaration and the practical measures that it will put in place to protect civilians from the harm caused by the use of explosive weapons in populated areas. We encourage all countries to sign up to the instrument and play their part in its universalization and full implementation.

The rapid development of autonomous weapons systems poses serious legal, ethical and security challenges. Addressing such concerns through new legally binding rules and limits is one of the most pressing items on the disarmament agenda. The majority of States want to see real progress made on autonomous weapons systems through new prohibitions, rules and limits. Despite the efforts of a few to frustrate multilateral progress on the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, States have begun to coalesce around several areas of convergence, as evidenced by the joint statement delivered by Austria today on behalf of 69 States, including New Zealand. As a contribution towards that progress, New Zealand was pleased to sponsor the work of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research to identify the areas of convergence, including at a workshop for interested States held in Geneva earlier this year. It now falls to the high contracting parties to the Convention to demonstrate that they can meaningfully translate the development of substantive understandings into formal, agreed progress. We look forward to working with all parties to the Convention to that end.

The social, economic and humanitarian consequences associated with the illicit trade in conventional arms continue to motivate our support for the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT). The ATT's strengthened regulation of the trade in conventional arms makes an important contribution to international and regional security and the reduction of human suffering. The full implementation of the Treaty is key to the realization of its goals. As the outgoing Chair of the ATT Voluntary Trust Fund, New Zealand has been pleased to contribute closely to that work since 2019, and we urge all States seeking assistance to implement the ATT to consider submitting a project application to the Fund. The Voluntary Trust Fund is a unique, effective and powerful tool for improving the implementation of the ATT's provisions.

**Ms. Quashie** (Ghana): The increasingly widespread use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and the

incessant illicit flow of small arms and light weapons and their ammunition to militant groups, especially in West Africa, remains of grave concern to Ghana, as they pose a major threat to peace and security and the continent's long-term social and economic development. Not only do those illicit weapons fuel most conflicts in the region, but they also frustrate conflict-resolution efforts, hamper peacekeeping operations and have contributed to the rise in criminality, youth violence, hostage-taking and cross-border crimes.

Ghana therefore welcomes the opportunity to speak on the cluster "Conventional weapons", and associates itself with the statements delivered on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and the Group of African States (see A/C.1/77/PV.16).

The impact of the illicit flow of small arms and light weapons in West Africa led to approximately 346 terrorist attacks on the African continent within the first quarter of 2022 alone, 49 per cent of which took place in the West African subregion and caused the internal displacement of people in the region.

Similarly, improvised explosive devices (IEDs), which have become a weapon of war for militant and terrorist groups in the subregion, have been one of the main causes of casualties among military forces and civilians. In Burkina Faso, the incidents of the detonation of IEDs and explosives rose from approximately 80 in 2016 to more than 1,800 in 2019. In addition, between 2016 and 2019, more than 4,000 deaths recorded in the Niger, Burkina Faso and Mali were attributed to the detonation of IEDs.

The situation in West Africa and the Sahel urgently calls for global concerted action to deal decisively with the security of conventional weapons in order to deprive terrorists and extremist groups from having access to them for use in their destabilization activities across the region and other parts of the world. We reiterate, in that regard, the continued 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, the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, the Convention on Cluster Munitions and the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons in global efforts to prevent the illicit acquisition, proliferation and misuse of conventional weapons.

We welcome the outcome documents of the eighth Biennial Meeting of States on the Programme of Action



to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and reiterate our support for the establishment of a United Nations fellowship and training programme on small arms and light weapons, especially for developing countries.

We also acknowledge the efforts of the eighth Conference of States Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty, held in August in Geneva. We reaffirm the importance of international cooperation and assistance towards the implementation of the ATT and encourage States that have yet to subscribe to the Treaty to do so in order to achieve its universalization. The ATT is very important in tracing the source of small arms and light weapons and serves as a basis for monitoring both at the local and subregional levels.

We implore arms manufacturing and exporting countries to respect the exemption certificate regime for arms imports into West Africa, established by the Economic Community of West African States Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons, Their Ammunition and Other Related Materials to reduce diversion and illicit transfer. We believe that deeper collaboration between international organizations and the African Union, without preconditions, will provide support for regional programmes, such as Silencing the Guns in Africa, a flagship initiative of Agenda 2063 of the African Union, which aspires to end conflict, gender-based violence, extremism and crime in Africa.

My delegation believes that ammunition management and control are vital to moving the world closer and faster towards the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly target 16.4, which calls for a significant reduction in illicit small arms and light weapons trafficking by 2030. 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 safe, secure and accountable management of conventional ammunition and to preventing the diversion of stockpiles to unauthorized users. In that regard, we look forward to the successful outcome of the Open-ended Working Group on Conventional Ammunition, with the mandate to elaborate a set of political commitments as a new global framework for addressing existing gaps in through-life ammunition management.

In conclusion, Ghana believes that efforts in combating the proliferation of conventional weapons must be given the same priority as weapons of mass destruction, given the immense havoc that they are capable of wreaking, particularly when they fall into the wrong hands. We urge the international community to show the necessary political will to address the threat posed by the illicit accumulation and proliferation of conventional weapons in a proactive and decisive manner.

**Mr. Gurbanov (Azerbaijan):** The excessive accumulation and proliferation of conventional weapons continue to pose a threat to regional security and stability and the safety of civilians. The full implementation of commitments laid out in the relevant international documents and practical steps taken to that end are necessary to tackle that threat. Combating the illicit transfer, stockpiling and use of conventional weapons, including landmines, is of the utmost humanitarian urgency and requires decisive multilateral action. That could also make an important contribution to post-conflict rehabilitation, reintegration and peacebuilding efforts in conflict-affected countries.

Azerbaijan is one of the countries most contaminated by landmines and explosive remnants of war in the world. Such devices were planted by Armenia during its military occupation of our territories for almost three decades. Since the signing of the trilateral statement of 10 November 2020, Azerbaijan has neutralized more than 67,000 anti-personnel and anti-tank landmines, as well as other explosive remnants of war, in the liberated territories. To understand the magnitude of the demining task, the area so far cleared constitutes approximately 4 per cent of the overall areas subject to mine action.

That humanitarian problem can be mitigated by Armenia's release of all maps of minefields. Following the end of the conflict, Armenia first denied the presence of any maps and then handed over some of the pre-2020 minefield records. Whereas those records constitute 5 per cent of all liberated areas, only some 25 per cent of those records have proven to be accurate.

Over the past 30 years, more than 3,300 Azerbaijani citizens became mine victims, including 357 children and 38 women. In the post-conflict period, over the past two years, approximately 260 Azerbaijani civilians and military were killed or seriously injured by mine explosions.

Despite the commitments on the termination of all military activities, Armenia's armed forces continued to plant mines on a massive scale on the territory of Azerbaijan. It was established that more than 3,000 anti-personnel landmines recently detected in Azerbaijan's border districts of Kalbajar, Lachin and Dashkasan were manufactured in Armenia in 2021 and, accordingly, laid therein after the signing of the trilateral statement. Moreover, trap mines installed by Armenia's forces in residential areas of the Lachin district before their withdrawal therefrom in August 2022 leave no doubt that the aim was to inflict as many casualties as possible.

A complex mine threat impedes ongoing rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts in the liberated territories of Azerbaijan and the safe return of hundreds of thousands of internally displaced persons (IDPs) to their homes. The indiscriminate landmine deployment across the river crossings, bridges, agriculture fields, cemeteries and roads constitutes a war crime under international humanitarian law.

There is a very clear and direct relationship between humanitarian mine clearance and benefits to returnees and the wider socioeconomic system. Humanitarian mine action activities in Azerbaijan serve as a driver of progress in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

Despite substantial resources mobilized by Azerbaijan to address the humanitarian threats stemming from landmines, given the scale of the mine-contaminated areas, humanitarian demining operations still require more funding. An increased international partnership and adequate and predictable mine action funding are indispensable to the further strengthening of national mine action efforts in Azerbaijan, which are critically important to saving lives and ensuring the safe return of IDPs to their homes.

In the international context, Azerbaijan supports the objectives of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction and continues to make voluntary contributions to its goals by voting in favour of draft resolutions on the implementation of that Convention in the General Assembly.

**Ms. Alvarado** (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): Weapons proliferation is still on the rise and continues to exacerbate instability within the international system.

That upwards trend is like a virus spreading through countries and societies. War has also incited a drive to justify that dangerous spiral towards the expansion and refinement of military arsenals as State policy.

The supply of conventional arms — from heavy weaponry and large-calibre artillery to small arms and light weapons and their ammunition — is dominating economies, benefiting manufacturers and exporters and interfering with our security and socioeconomic development. Global ammunition expenditure has reached approximately \$15 billion and continues to rise. Every year, enough bullets are produced to kill almost double the number of people on the planet. Ammunition is an essential component for the operation of firearms. It is the fuel that perpetuates violence. Identifying ammunition sources and supply routes can therefore be just as important as identifying illicit arms flows.

However, those arguments seem to fall on deaf ears, given that some States are openly blocking negotiations on the regulation of such a crucial issue, while others, with the same objective, utterly disregard the calls of the region most affected by the illicit trade and diversion of small arms and light weapons and their ammunition, instead establishing parallel processes.

Several months ago, we came together for the eighth 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, to which Peru attaches the utmost priority. Unfortunately, its outcome document failed to include any mention of our concerns over the illicit trafficking and misuse of the ammunition of such arms. The next review conference of the Programme of Action will offer an opportunity for affected States to reintroduce the issue of ammunition in the Programme of Action, without prejudice to the new forums that have been established.

I would like to take this opportunity to express our appreciation for the valuable and impeccable work carried out by my colleague and dear friend, Ambassador Nohra Quintero Correa of Colombia, in the negotiations on the draft resolution on the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects, of which Peru is a co-sponsor (A/C.1/77/L.50).

It is deplorable that weapons with indiscriminate lethal effects are still being used, which flagrantly violates international human rights and international humanitarian law.

Peru, as a State party to the Ottawa Convention, continues to honour its commitment to be a country free from anti-personnel mines. Our efforts in the field of humanitarian demining — work that is currently being conducted jointly with the friendly country of Ecuador — take a comprehensive approach to victim assistance and mine clearance. Peru's commitment to humanitarian disarmament is also reflected in the Oslo Convention. We condemn the use of cluster munitions by anyone, under any circumstances, and call on all countries that produce and use such weapons to adhere to the Convention so as to prevent innocent civilians from becoming victims of the consequences of the existence of those indiscriminate weapons.

Advances in military technology towards ever greater autonomy has led us to a scenario in which machines have the power and discretion to end human lives. While that is morally inadmissible, it is still undefined in legal terms. Lethal autonomous weapon systems are of major concern to humankind and require an urgent political and legal response from the international community. Peru considers the best response in that regard to be the establishment of legally binding bans. Regulation through a new treaty is the most effective way to tackle the growing uncertainty surrounding what is or is not acceptable with regard to increasingly complex autonomous weapon systems.

We are witnessing the same strategic security schemes being replicated in tackling conventional disarmament as with nuclear disarmament, with the goal of some States being to perpetuate their military power. We are also observing how producer and exporter countries continue to prioritize their economic interests, while conventional arms account for the highest number of victims and deaths worldwide, fuel armed conflict and violence, hinder sustainable development and render international peace and security increasingly precarious.

**Mr. Diack** (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): My delegation aligns itself with the statements delivered by Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and by Nigeria on behalf of the Group of African States (see A/C.1/77/PV.16). We are pleased to participate in this thematic debate on conventional weapons.

It is only right that conventional weapons are generally equated with weapons of mass destruction in certain parts of the world owing to their widespread

distribution, facilitated in part by gaps in control regimes. Those gaps compel us all to urgently preserve the Arms Trade Treaty, the 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 and the Protocol Against the Illicit Manufacturing and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition, as well as various other relevant regional and subregional instruments.

Nevertheless, it is the apathy that taints the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms in particular to which Senegal wishes to draw the attention of all delegations. The Register, as the sole universal mechanism for strengthening transparency and confidence in the field of conventional arms, has several shortcomings that undermine its relevance and credibility. Three such shortcomings are worth highlighting.

The first is the absence of an eighth category in the Register relating to small arms and light weapons. In order to adequately meet its definition, the Register must include, as an imperative, small arms and light weapons alongside the seven other traditional categories, for it is indeed the Register of Conventional Arms, not the register of certain categories of conventional arms.

Moreover, by integrating small arms and light weapons as a category in its own right, the Register will take into account the types of conventional weapons that pose the greatest security threat to many countries. That could encourage those countries to take greater interest in submitting their reports, thereby helping to raise the level of participation in the Register, which has been steadily declining for several years.

Furthermore, it is true that the creation of category VIII will create an additional burden in relation to data collection work on the transfer of small arms and light weapons and could therefore lead some countries to report incomplete information. However, as regards the strengthening of transparency, we believe it preferable that countries provide incomplete information with room for improvement on their reporting practices rather than not participate in the Register at all.

In addition, many States are already accustomed to recording their international transfers of small arms and light weapons under other instruments, such as the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT). Therefore, the transition from the 7+1 formula to category VIII should be no

more than a simple administrative task if countries are offered the option to use information that they have already provided under the ATT to report to the Register. That interesting prospect was opened up at the seventh Conference of States Parties to the ATT, hence the importance of enhanced coordination between the respective secretariats of the ATT and the Register.

The second shortcoming of the Register is that it covers only the international transfer of conventional weapons, while some States can acquire such arms through their own national arms industries. In other words, countries are asked to report on their international arms transfers but provide only general additional information as regards their supply of arms through national production. That situation renders the Register discriminatory towards those countries that rely on arms imports. Indeed, the level of transparency asked of those countries regarding their acquisitions is higher than that expected of countries that source arms from domestic production. That loophole must be rectified in order to allow the Register to cover the two main forms of conventional arms acquisition on an equal footing and thereby fulfil its primary function of identifying and preventing the excessive and destabilizing accumulation of conventional weapons.

The Register's third shortcoming relates to its secretariat's insufficient capacities. The 2022 Group of Governmental Experts tasked with reviewing the Register is examining that issue and provides recommendations that merit our full support. However, facing those challenges requires us, first and foremost, to raise awareness within the international community of the worrisome state in which the Register finds itself. That is the purpose of the side event to be organized jointly by the Office for Disarmament Affairs and the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research on 25 October to mark the Register's thirtieth anniversary.

Senegal therefore invites all delegations to participate and calls on them to co-sponsor and vote in favour of draft resolution A/C.1/77/L.48 on transparency in armaments.

**Ms. Campos (Brazil):** Although weapons of mass destruction deserve our attention, they should not overshadow conventional weapons. Indeed, the overwhelming share of casualties and fatalities in the course of armed conflicts is caused by conventional weapons. We are also painfully cognizant of the risks to public order posed by the illicit trade in

small arms. That is the reason that conventional weapons remain one of the most sensitive topics on the disarmament agenda. Brazil recognizes, on the one hand, the legitimacy of the possession and use of certain conventional weapons for national security purposes and their trade, as regulated by the Arms Trade Treaty. On the other hand, we must be aware of their destabilizing effects. It is particularly worrisome that such weapons might be used in an indiscriminate manner, infringing on international humanitarian law and in contradiction with the text of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons. To strike a delicate balance between those considerations, the disarmament and arms control regime of such weapons must be kept up to date. In particular, the regime should tackle the challenges posed by emerging technologies applied to the development of conventional weapons.

With that in mind, Brazil has supported, in different forums, the continuous discussions on how to improve current regulations and controls in the face of the evolving nature of the subject. With regard to the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, for instance, we support the discussions on the improvement of the International Tracing Instrument. Modern technologies applied to the field, such as modular and polymer weapons and three-dimensional printing, should not enable criminals and non-State actors to have the upper hand in relation to Governments' efforts to suppress illegal trade. Similarly, with regard to ammunition, at both the most recent session of the Group of Governmental Experts and the ongoing session of the Open-ended Working Group, we advocate the adoption of minimal standards of marking with a view to strengthening tracing activities in the crucial fight against ammunition diversion.

In line with that approach, Brazil has for many years maintained an active engagement with regard to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) in order to promote a qualified, effective and action-oriented debate on the regulation of lethal autonomous weapons systems. In particular, we have stressed the need for regulation that recognizes the centrality of human control in the development and use of autonomous systems, in accordance with the norms and principles of international humanitarian law. Reflecting that long-standing engagement, on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, the Brazilian Special Representative for the Conference



on Disarmament, Ambassador Flávio Damico, was appointed earlier this year to preside over the Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) on Emerging Technologies in the Area of Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems under the CCW. My delegation takes this opportunity to convey our appreciation for the support we have received while presiding over the Group. At its 2022 session, the GGE received an impressive number of proposals from members and observers, which have significantly enriched the current debate and indicated possible future options for developing an international framework concerning lethal autonomous weapons. In addition to its two formal sessions, the Group held three intersessional informal meetings and managed to approve a consensus-based report last July.

We believe the work of the GGE touches on a strategically important subject that merits keen attention from all the high contracting parties to the CCW and the international community. There is a growing call from various quarters — States, non-governmental organizations, think tanks and academia — to discuss and develop a global framework concerning lethal autonomous weapons systems, as indicated by the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Mrs. Izumi Nakamitsu, in her opening statement before the First Committee (see A/C.1/77/PV.2). My delegation shares her belief that States must narrow their differences and intensify their work to agree on a pathway leading to an effective international instrument. Brazil notes that that shared concern led to the adoption of Human Rights Council resolution 51/22 on the human rights implications of new and emerging technologies in the military domain. In the same vein, the joint statement on lethal autonomous weapons systems delivered under this cluster provided a further positive contribution to the discussions of the GGE. We hope those efforts will impart renewed momentum to the GGE's work with a view to ensuring that the risks and challenges with regard to the military use of artificial intelligence are adequately and effectively addressed.

**Mr. Khaldi** (Algeria): The illicit trade in small arms and light weapons continues to be a serious threat to peace, security and stability in many regions around the world, particularly in Africa. In facing that global challenge, Algeria has continuously supported and steadily advanced all concerted efforts at the national, regional and global levels aimed at preventing, combating and eradicating the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects, including

by preventing and combating the diversion and the illicit international transfer of small arms and light weapons to all unauthorized recipients. That steadfast endeavour stems from Algeria's unique experience in fighting the scourge of terrorism, as well as from the multiple security challenges evolving around its geographical borders.

I take the opportunity of this discussion to reaffirm Algeria's position with regard to conventional weapons as follows.

First, Algeria remains fully committed to the 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) and continues to advocate their full implementation in a balanced and comprehensive manner. In that context, Algeria welcomes the consensual adoption of the outcome document of the eighth Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action on Small Arms and further welcomes its decision to establish a standing dedicated fellowship training programme on small arms and light weapons. In that spirit, Algeria looks forward to the convening of the fourth review conference of the Programme of Action in 2024 and reiterates its readiness to work constructively with Member States to undertake a comprehensive review of the Programme of Action and further advance its balanced implementation.

Secondly, Algeria takes note with satisfaction of the report of the Secretary-General on assistance to States for curbing the illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons and collecting them and the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects (A/77/77), for which my country has submitted its national contribution to further enhance the Programme of Action and the ITI.

Thirdly, at the regional level, Algeria works tirelessly to implement the 2011 African Union Strategy on the Control of Illicit Proliferation, Circulation and Trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons and remains fully engaged in the fulfilment of the African Union initiative on Silencing the Guns in Africa.

Reaffirming its historic commitment to international humanitarian law and its development, Algeria continues to fulfil its obligations under the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) and its annexed protocols, to which it is a party. In that

vein, Algeria hopes that humanitarian legal framework may allow the further development and codification of the humanitarian rules and principles placing human beings and their full and effective protection above all other considerations. Moreover, and given that the rapid technological development and possible use of lethal autonomous weapons systems in armed conflict is deeply alarming, Algeria supports the work of the Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) on Emerging Technologies in the Area of Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems, and looks forward to strengthening its mandate in the context of the objectives and purposes of the CCW to pursue a legally binding instrument on lethal autonomous weapons. My delegation wishes to express its gratitude to all stakeholders for their efforts to advance the work of the GGE towards achieving concrete results, including the initiative of the joint statement delivered this morning on behalf of a group of States, the objectives of which — aimed at strengthening convergence on lethal autonomous weapons — my country shares.

On the other hand, the fulfilment of the noble objectives set out by the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention is also among our top priorities. The experience of Algeria, which has implemented its obligations under that Convention, in continuity with its national efforts in the area of mine clearance and victim assistance, presents a success model in the fight against anti-personnel mines and their devastating effects.

It is worth recalling that, five years ago, Algeria successfully carried out its landmine clearance obligations under the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction, also known as the Ottawa Convention.

Furthermore, Algeria continues to fully support the work of the Convention, including through active participation in the activities of its Standing Committee. It is in that context that Algeria had the privilege of chairing, in 2022, the Committee on Victim Assistance.

Lastly, my delegation aligns itself with the statements delivered on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, the Group of African States and the Group of Arab States under this cluster (see A/C.1/77/PV.16).

**Mr. Rosinas** (Lithuania): Lithuania aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European

Union (see A/C.1/77/PV.16). In our national capacity, I would like to make the following remarks.

We reiterate our strongest condemnation of Russia's unprovoked and unjustified war of aggression against Ukraine and its continued violations of Ukraine's sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence.

In that context, permit me to recall that, right before Russia's full-scale invasion in Ukraine on 24 February, the Baltic States and Ukraine invoked the mechanism for consultation and cooperation, in accordance with the risk-reduction chapter of the Vienna Document of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. Russia and Belarus were asked for an explanation about the unprecedented Russian military build-up and concentration of forces in the territories of both Russia and Belarus near Ukraine and in the occupied Crimea and Donbas, as well as for answers about the unannounced major joint Russia-Belarus military exercises in Belarus. However, Russia and Belarus completely disregarded our legitimate concerns, openly spread false information and misused that mechanism. We now have a precedent and proof that the so-called Russian-Belarusian joint exercises were used as a disguise for the upcoming invasion. We call on all States to reject Russia's blatant attempts to acquire territory by force and to refrain from arms transfers to Russia.

We also condemn Russia's use of anti-personnel landmines and cluster munitions, as well as its indiscriminate use of other explosive weapons, such as rockets, artillery shells and improvised explosive devices against civilians in Ukraine, which is a clear violation of international humanitarian law. Russia must immediately stop its war of aggression, withdraw all of its troops and military equipment from Ukraine and respect Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders.

We also call on Belarus to end its complicity in this war and, in particular, to immediately stop providing heavy weapons to the aggressor State and stop allowing the use of the territory of Belarus as a launchpad for attacks against Ukraine.

We are also facing numerous conventional weapons challenges posed by State and non-State actors all across the globe. Illicit arms trafficking, international terrorism, the proliferation of arms and ammunition and uncontrolled flows of small arms and light weapons,

as well as violations of international humanitarian law hinder the enforcement of the rule of law, prevent successful conflict resolution and impede social and economic development.

Lithuania supports the development and implementation of international rules to ensure responsible arms trade and emphasizes the importance of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) in the context of global arms control. We call on all countries, especially major arms producers and exporters, to become State parties to the ATT.

Lithuania stresses the importance of universalizing and strengthening the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) and of compliance with all of its provisions and annexed Protocols. We are convinced that discussions on new technologies, including regarding the responsible military use of emerging and disruptive technologies, shall remain within the CCW framework, which brings together major stakeholders and relevant military, legal and political expertise.

We support practical solutions to enhance civilian protection that are in line with existing international humanitarian law provisions. We call on all State and non-State actors to uphold and comply with international humanitarian law and other measures to protect civilians.

**Mrs. Liolocha** (Democratic Republic of the Congo) (*spoke in French*): My delegation endorses the statements made by the representatives of Indonesia and Nigeria, on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and the Group of African States, respectively (see A/C.1/77/PV.16).

The uncontrolled spread of conventional weapons, in general, is an ongoing concern and hampers peace and development. The Democratic Republic of the Congo is therefore resolutely committed to combating the proliferation of weapons and has subscribed to several subregional, regional and international political and legal instruments aimed at controlling conventional weapons, including small arms and light weapons.

The proliferation of small arms and light weapons reinforces the activities of armed groups in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. Indeed, those groups derive their sources of income and supply of arms and ammunition from the illicit exploitation and plundering of our natural resources. That is why my delegation

believes that the process of reducing and controlling such weapons must continue in order to carry out consultations to limit international arms transfers.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo welcomes the initiatives already taken in that regard and supports the Secretary-General's global approach to disarmament. We must look forward and meet the challenges of the future, because our efforts in the field of conventional arms will contribute to the strengthening of international peace and security.

My country remains committed to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and its five Protocols, because of the irreparable burden caused by the human, social, economic and political impacts of the uncontrolled proliferation of these weapons.

With regard to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction, also known as the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, my delegation remains committed to continuing the demining process in the affected areas. Since the beginning of its activities in 2002, the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS), together with other partners, has supported the efforts of the Congolese Government to enable it to ensure a safe environment for its people.

UNMAS has continued to provide technical and political support to the Congolese authorities and peacekeeping operations through activities such as specialized training, the installation and upgrading of weapons and ammunition storage, disposal of unserviceable ammunition, the assessment of ammunition storage areas and the development of mitigation measures to reduce risks to the population.

As the Democratic Republic of the Congo remains committed to achieving the total clearance of anti-personnel mines on its territory, the Congolese Mine Action Centre, in accordance with the provisions of article 5 of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, has submitted a further request for an extension of the deadline to clear the remaining 33 hazardous areas, which will cost approximately \$3.4 million.

Various circumstances have paralysed mine action operations and prevented the Democratic Republic of the Congo from achieving compliance after the extension was granted. Those include insecurity owing to the proliferation of armed groups, the emergence

of the Allied Democratic Forces, a significant drop in funding, various Ebola outbreaks and the coronavirus disease pandemic.

I note that in the context of the implementation of Action 3 of the Oslo Action Plan and in view of the significant reduction in the number of demining operators in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the national programme is planning, during this extension period, to implement a policy of integrating and enhancing the status of Congolese women deminers in operational teams, in close collaboration with the organizations concerned.

In conclusion, the Democratic Republic of the Congo is counting on the support of all its partners to enable it to complete its work before 31 December 2025.

**Ms. Saggese** (United Kingdom): The effective control of conventional weapons is a goal that should unite us all and remains a priority for the United Kingdom. The diversion and misuse of conventional weapons, particularly small arms and light weapons, costs hundreds of thousands of lives every year, undermines security and sustainable development, and fuels conflict, crime and terrorism. We must continue to work together to tackle this scourge. We recognize the differential impact of these issues on women, men, girls and boys and commend efforts to ensure the full, meaningful and effective participation of women across all efforts to counter these threats.

At the heart of our approach to countering illicit and destabilizing proliferation is the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), whose goal to create the highest possible common standards for regulating the international trade in conventional arms. We were pleased that the eighth Conference of States Parties was able to meet in person and hold a successful inaugural session of the Diversion Information Exchange Forum. The ATT grows stronger with addition of each new State party, and we warmly welcome the accession of the Philippines and Gabon this year. The United Kingdom will continue to work with all relevant actors to strengthen cooperation and reduce the supply of — and demand for — illicit weapons.

If we as a global community are to tackle illicit or destabilizing arms, we must also improve the management of ammunition. The United Kingdom is therefore committed to the success of the Open-ended Working Group on Conventional Ammunition. We look forward to agreeing on an ambitious and effective global framework that will help us all improve the

through-life management of conventional ammunition. Confidence-building measures have an increasingly central role to play in limiting the excessive or destabilizing accumulation of arms.

This year we are marking the thirtieth anniversary of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms. Its adoption was an important step towards global transparency. The United Kingdom consistently reports its exports to the Register. While we welcome the slight increase in reporting this year, more progress is needed, and we urge States to submit reports without delay. We will continue to work with the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs and others to support implementation of the Register and wider transparency efforts.

We must stand up for international humanitarian law. The United Kingdom had the honour of presiding over the tenth Meeting of the States Parties of the Convention on Cluster Munitions last month, which was an important opportunity to take stock of the implementation of the Lausanne Action Plan. During our presidency, we also pursued universalization and continued our important work on alternative financing options for mine action.

The United Kingdom remains deeply concerned at the extensive and well-documented use of cluster munitions and landmines, particularly in Ukraine, where they have caused hundreds of civilian casualties. Consistent reports of Russia's use of anti-personnel mines and victim-activated booby traps, including devices placed on corpses, calls into question its compliance with its obligations under Amended Protocol II to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW). The brutality of the war leaves Russia with serious questions to answer with regard to its compliance with international humanitarian law.

These developments underscore the importance of the agreement of a political declaration on strengthening the protection of civilians from the humanitarian consequences arising from the use of explosive weapons in populated areas. The United Kingdom will sign the declaration at the adoption ceremony in Dublin next month and will work for the delivery of practical humanitarian benefits and adherence to international humanitarian law through its implementation thereafter.

The United Kingdom welcomes the ongoing substantive discussions in the CCW Group of Governmental Experts on Emerging Technologies in the



Area of Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems, despite the efforts of one State to hinder them. We encourage the Group of Governmental Experts to deepen its consideration of the several constructive proposals it has before it in 2023, which we consider merits 20 days' work. The United Kingdom looks forward to working with partners to develop these proposals, striving for a normative and operational framework based on increased understanding of the concept of human involvement, ethical development and use, and compliance with international humanitarian law.

The rules-based international system is crucial for tackling threats to life and security. We therefore call on all States to work in good faith, support the functioning of all relevant treaties and structures, including through the payment of assessed contributions, and join us in pursuing a future more peaceful than our past.

**Mr. Albu-mohammed (Iraq)** (*spoke in Arabic*): The delegation of Iraq aligns itself with the statements made on behalf of the Group of Arab States and the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/77/PV.16).

The disastrous effects of the phenomenon of illicit trafficking in conventional weapons fuelling armed conflicts and supporting organized crime throughout the world are well known. The phenomenon is the main source of funding for terrorist groups and has the negative effect of impeding societal development. The international community should therefore redouble its efforts to create a comprehensive system for combating the illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons of all types, banning their export and monitoring their movement across borders, so that the world may enjoy greater peace and security.

Iraq welcomes the adoption by consensus of the outcome document of the Eighth 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. We hope that its recommendations will be implemented, in particular those related to the United Nations Fellowship Programme for capacity-building on small arms and light weapons issues.

The proliferation of anti-personnel mines, explosive remnants of wars and cluster munitions presents a great danger, leading to the death or maiming of thousands of people and having long-term socioeconomic and environmental effects. Iraq tops the list of countries

that suffer from the problem of mines. In that context, the national institutions in Iraq continue to strive to meet the challenge and establish emergency plans to clear mines in liberated areas in accordance with State priorities and raise people's awareness so that they can safely return to their homes. Iraq thanks all States and parties that have provided us with assistance and support in this area. We stress the dire need for the international community to continue providing support and assistance to Iraqi national institutions so as to do away with those deadly weapons affecting people, the economy and the environment alike.

As a complement to its national efforts aimed at clearing the explosive remnants of war, Iraq, based on its belief that the humanitarian objectives of the conventional weapons conventions are an important addition to international humanitarian law, will preside over the eleventh Meeting of States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions, to be held at the United Nations in Geneva from 11 to 14 September 2023. Iraq's delegation will do its utmost to steer the work of the session in accordance with the Lausanne Action Plan, and we will focus on promoting the universality of the Convention on Cluster Munitions. In the same context, Iraq organized an event at the margins of the current First Committee session to advance the universality of the Convention and we hope that there will be substantive and constructive collaboration with all States, international organizations and civil society organizations with a view to implementing the provisions and objectives of the Convention.

**Mr. Tiahoun (Burkina Faso)** (*spoke in French*): My delegation associates itself with the statements made by the representatives of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and the Republic of Indonesia on behalf of the Group of African States and the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, respectively (see A/C.1/77/PV.16). I would like to make a few remarks in my national capacity.

The proliferation, circulation and illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons continue to be a threat to peace and security in various parts of the world, including Africa. Illicit arms trafficking, second only to drug trafficking, is a real threat to the peace and stability of all States, and even to the survival of some. That illicit trade undermines the regional balances, increases corruption and fuels transnational organized crime and terrorism networks, thereby jeopardizing the many development efforts of our States.

My country, Burkina Faso, which has been experiencing an unprecedented security crisis for more than six years, with considerable loss of human life, is a victim of the circulation of such weapons in the Sahel region.

On the legal front, Burkina Faso is a party to the relevant universal instruments, such as the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), the Economic Community of West African States Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons, Their Ammunition and Other Related Materials and the Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. It is also a party to most international agreements on the fight against terrorism.

Furthermore, aware that the maintenance of peace must be an absolute imperative for all States, Burkina Faso has put in place a robust legal and institutional framework, as reflected on the adoption of law No. 0142019/AN of 30 April 2019, incorporating the Arms Trade Treaty and the establishment the National Arms Control Commission. Burkina Faso's commitment is also reflected in the adoption of law No. 030-2021/AN of 18 May 2021, on the general regime for arms, their parts, components, ammunition and other related materials in Burkina Faso, which strengthens and completes the legal framework.

In addition to conventional weapons, improvised explosive devices are increasingly used by terrorist groups. Such improvised explosive devices affect several countries. My country therefore attaches importance to the consideration of this issue in the context of the Convention on Conventional Weapons.

With regard to anti-personnel mines, there are many different consequences of their use. My country, like many delegations, calls for universal adherence to the Ottawa Convention, and we urge all States and institutions concerned to pool their efforts to provide assistance to countries affected by such devices.

The fight against, and the trafficking in, small arms and light weapons should involve the entire international community through a strong commitment to regulating the trade in those weapons. That is why my delegation welcomes the conclusions of the eighth 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 and its outcome. It welcomes its decision to establish a continuous specialized training programme on small arms and light weapons to enhance technical knowledge and expertise in areas related to the implementation of the Programme of Action and the International Tracing Instrument, in particular in developing countries.

*The Chair took the Chair.*

Burkina Faso is aware of the damage and consequences of the uncontrolled circulation of conventional weapons. That supports its commitment to changing things and improving the regulation of the circulation of arms among States and authorized structures. While stressing the need to promote the legitimate and responsible use of those weapons, I would like to reaffirm Burkina Faso's commitment to working with the international community for the attainment of a world free from the dangers associated with conventional weapons of all kinds.

**Mrs. Dias Paranavitana** (Sri Lanka): We align ourselves with the statement delivered by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/77/PV.16). We wish to make the following observations in our national capacity.

Today the world is threatened by multiple crises, which have wider security concerns, with social, economic and humanitarian repercussions. In a large majority of conflicts, the illicit manufacture and circulation of small arms and light weapons continue to play a leading role in perpetuating and exacerbating those conflicts. In that regard, Sri Lanka wishes to reiterate the need for the balanced and full implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. At this juncture, we wish to underline the need for the full and effective implementation of the Programme of Action and the International Tracing Instrument, which provides a framework for weapons tracing and forms a vital tool in the implementation of the Programme of Action.

We welcome the consensus achieved during the eighth Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action in July this year. We welcome any measures aimed at strengthening coordination with national focal points for the implementation of the Programme of Action. We also underscore the need for building the national

capacity for weapons marking, identification and tracing, which can facilitate the efforts of regional and international bodies to enhance measures to identify cross-border trafficking, strengthen concerted initiatives to regulate international trade and ensure the effective control of illicit small arms and light weapons. In that context, Sri Lanka supports the proposal to establish an open-ended technical group that focuses on realizing international cooperation and ensures full implementation of the International Tracing Instrument and the Programme of Action, with a special focus on the recent technological developments in small arms and light weapons manufacturing and design, modular and polymer weapons and 3D printing.

Sri Lanka also recognizes the need to fill the global gaps in through-life ammunition management and to provide the necessary support and capacity-building to States to enable effective global action to address those challenges. We welcome the deliberations of the Open-ended Working Group on Conventional Ammunition in that regard.

Sri Lanka values the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) framework, became a State party in 2004 and is a party to the Convention's protocols, with the exception of Protocol V. We recognize the unique structure of the CCW and the flexibility that it provides, which allows it to adapt to the changing sophistication of conventional weapon technologies and the evolving nature of conflicts. We look forward to the sixth Review Conference, scheduled for later this year, as an opportunity to review its implementation and contribute to its further development.

My delegation also wishes to highlight the impact of the rapid development of new technologies, particularly in relation to cyberspace and artificial intelligence. We note the unique challenges posed by technology, such as increasing autonomy in weapons systems, and we underscore the need to take urgent action for internationally agreed regulations and limitations.

Sri Lanka became a State party to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction in 2017. On 24 August 2021, Sri Lanka destroyed its last remaining stock of 11,840 landmines, almost a year earlier than the deadline set by the Convention. Sri Lanka also joined the Committee on article 5 implementation for the period 2021 and 2022, and will work alongside other countries

in the Committee to support States parties in their implementation efforts.

We hope that the twentieth Meeting of the States Parties will derive tangible outcomes to strengthen the architecture of the Convention by promoting universal observance, promote constructive dialogue with mine-affected areas, strengthen international cooperation to meet the obligations of the Convention and compliance, develop methods to clear or destroy mines and explore alternatives, and foster regulatory frameworks to guarantee the rights of mine victims.

Finally, my delegation would like to underline that Sri Lanka affirms the sovereign right of States to acquire, manufacture, export, import and retain conventional arms and the relevant components, including ammunition for national security purposes. The inherent problem with conventional weapons is not the regular trade, but the illicit flow of conventional arms to non-State actors, especially terrorist groups and militias, which continue to cause much harm and devastation in conflicts around the world. It is to inhibit and stop that illicit trade that we must work together concertedly, as a community of nations.

**Mr. Baumann** (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): As several recent events have underlined, civilians are the primary victims of armed conflicts and the use of conventional weapons. In that regard, Switzerland is deeply concerned about the numerous and credible allegations that cluster munitions and anti-personnel mines have been used in Ukraine, primarily by Russian forces. In line with the relevant Oslo and Lausanne declarations, Switzerland condemns any use of anti-personnel mines and cluster munitions. Moreover, armed violence often triggers humanitarian crises and undermines peacebuilding efforts, while at the same time compromising the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Switzerland will continue its work to address those challenges and to ensure strict compliance with international humanitarian law. In an international security environment that has deteriorated significantly, it is all the more important to highlight the successes that our efforts have achieved in the field of conventional weapons and to ensure the full implementation of the existing instruments. In that regard, I would like to highlight three points that deserve particular attention.

First, addressing the humanitarian consequences of the use of explosive weapons in populated areas is

a priority for Switzerland. Both recent and ongoing armed conflicts have demonstrated the damage and suffering that the use of those weapons causes and the urgent need to improve the protection of civilians in armed conflicts in urban areas. In particular, a better implementation of international humanitarian law is required. We want to specifically thank Ireland for having led the work on a political declaration on that topic. Switzerland will endorse that declaration in Dublin on 18 November and calls on all States to do the same.

Secondly, we welcome the return of consensus at the eighth 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. That demonstrates the willingness of States to move forward jointly in the discussions, which is all the more necessary given the challenges faced in the implementation of both the Programme of Action and its International Tracing Instrument. We welcome in particular the commitments made by States to strengthen national capacities in a sustainable manner and to explore options to enhance international cooperation and assistance. The commitments that were made this summer have given us a clear and promising direction for the fourth review conference, to be held in 2024. With regard to the management of conventional ammunition, Switzerland has long paid great attention to that issue and is working to put it on the international agenda. We therefore welcome the fact that the Open-Ended Working Group on Conventional Ammunition began its work this year. Switzerland will continue to actively contribute to that important process, including with a view to strengthening international cooperation and assistance.

Thirdly, the collective efforts to combat the transfer of conventional arms to unintended recipients is a central aspect of the Arms Trade Treaty. We welcome the fact that the Chair has placed particular emphasis this year on the post-shipment verification of the end-users of conventional arms, which is a useful tool for ensuring that exported conventional arms remain with their authorized recipients. Since its implementation in 2013, Switzerland has carried out approximately 50 verifications, with very positive results.

Finally, we must also address the challenges posed by certain new weapon systems, in addition to affirming the importance of the work that should be

undertaken on autonomous weapons systems under the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons. In that regard, we view very positively the approach that autonomous weapons systems that cannot comply with international humanitarian law should not be developed or used, as well as the approach that other autonomous weapon systems should be subject to oversight to ensure that their use and effects comply with international humanitarian law at all times, and we hope that it will be possible to benefit quickly from those approaches.

**Mr. Miranda de la Peña** (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): Spain aligns itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union (see A/C.1/77/PV.16).

The context of threats to international peace and security in which we find ourselves makes the work of the First Committee more relevant than ever. Since February, we have witnessed Russia's unjustified aggression against Ukraine, the consequences of which reverberate across the entire planet, threatening peace and security at the global level.

The conventions on disarmament bring peace, security and development to millions of communities around the world. That is why Spain is firmly committed to instruments such as the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction and the Convention on Cluster Munitions, in whose coordinating committees we are honoured to participate. The contamination caused by anti-personnel mines and cluster munitions continues to hinder the development of many communities. Spain remains committed to supporting demining efforts and making the capabilities of our institutions available to the international community through training courses at different levels, in addition to the demining actions carried out by our armed forces deployed in peacekeeping operations. Moreover, as pointed out in the Secretary-General's disarmament agenda and resolution 2117 (2013), the diversion of small arms and light weapons and their consequent availability can destabilize countries, fuel armed conflicts and facilitate human rights violations.

Following the adoption of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects in 2001, Governments agreed to improve our national systems for the regulation of those weapons, including through stockpile management, marking and



tracing cooperation, as well as more generally through regional and international assistance and cooperation in that area. Two decades later, Spain considers it essential to implement the Programme of Action and adopt its International Tracing Instrument in order to raise awareness about the devastating impact of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons and to prevent their illicit trafficking to terrorist groups and other unauthorized recipients. We need to strengthen arms tracing capabilities by promoting a comprehensive investigative approach for dismantling supply networks. To that end, it is essential to create national focal points to facilitate communication and coordination between different administrations at the internal and transnational levels. Spain also contributes actively to the implementation of the plan of the Organization of American States to create a cross-border and regional communication mechanism on licit firearms transfers, and we also actively collaborate in the implementation of the European Union's action plan on firearms trafficking 2020–2025.

We have built a solid framework to address the challenges posed by the proliferation of small arms and light weapons based on instruments such as the Arms Trade Treaty, which this year held the first session of the Diversion Information Exchange Forum, as well as the Programme of Action and the International Ammunition Technical Guidelines. We must continue to support the capacity-building of States with fewer resources in order to better address that scourge.

The rapid development of artificial intelligence brings with it benefits, but it also entails potential risks to the safety and health of individuals if it does not have an appropriate regulatory framework. Pending the evolution of autonomous lethal weapons systems, Spain supports proposals aimed at ensuring compliance with international humanitarian law and international human rights law and prohibiting weapons systems that operate outside human control, given that the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons is the appropriate forum to respond to the new challenges brought on by the technological developments in the field of armaments.

**Ms. Quintero Correa** (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): Conventional weapons, including small arms and light weapons and their ammunition, continue to prolong conflicts. They inflict pain, destruction and death on a daily basis. They affect the lives, security and dignity of thousands of people throughout the

world. The illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and their ammunition, their excessive accumulation and their diversion to unauthorized recipients continue to be a concern and pose a threat to peace, security, sustainable development and global stability, owing to their humanitarian and socioeconomic consequences and their links to violence, organized crime, terrorism, illicit drug trafficking and other crimes — hence the importance of Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons and the International Tracing Instrument (ITI). There are many long-standing and new challenges. We must overcome them by integrating the efforts to implement the Programme of Action with the efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, taking advantage of the synergies that exist among various instruments and promoting the equal, full and effective participation of women and the participation of civil society.

Coordinated action must be strengthened, in particular with regard to border and customs control, stockpile management, marking, record-keeping, tracing, the identification of groups or individuals linked to that scourge and the adoption of measures to counter them. We welcome the adoption by consensus of the outcome document of the eighth 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 we fully endorse. We thank the Chair and the board members of the Meeting — in particular Guatemala and Hungary, which led the negotiations on the outcome document — for their commitment and dedication.

This year, together with Japan and South Africa, Colombia will introduce draft resolution A/C.1/77/L.50 on the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects, which seeks to maintain dialogue, concerted action and cooperation to strengthen the implementation of the Programme of Action and the ITI. We thank all delegations for their constructive participation in our consultations on the draft resolution, and we call on them to sponsor and adopt it. We reiterate that ammunition is a fundamental and inherent aspect of small arms and light weapons, and as such of the problem posed by their illicit trade and diversion. We believe in the importance of the work of the Open-ended Working Group on Conventional Ammunition. We stress that in order for it to be comprehensive and fill existing gaps,

the new global framework must explicitly and clearly include ammunition for small arms and light weapons.

As we are aware of the impact of anti-personnel mines on the lives of people and communities and on sustainable development, we are firmly committed to the full implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. Colombia has rendered 484 municipalities — or 79 per cent of its national territory — free of suspected anti-personnel mines for its communities, while humanitarian demining operations are being carried out in 99 municipalities. For Colombia, the Comprehensive Action against Anti-personnel Mines programme is a key component of building a comprehensive peace, as it plays an integral part in the promotion of land restitution, the individual or collective return of displaced populations to their land, the protection of ethnic populations and rural development. Given that conflicts are breaking out throughout the world and that mines and improvised explosive devices are the weapons of choice of non-State armed actors, the Convention — as well as its universalization and strengthening — are more relevant than ever. This year, in its role as Chair of the Convention, which it was honoured to assume, Colombia has worked to that end. Together with Germany and the Netherlands, Colombia also submitted draft resolution A/C.1/77/L.40 on the implementation of the Convention, which seeks to continue promoting its effective implementation and universalization. We call on all States to continue supporting the annual draft resolution and to participate in the twentieth meeting of the States parties to the Convention, to be held in Geneva from 21 to 25 November.

Given the humanitarian, legal, security, technological and ethical concerns created by the advent of new technological applications such as autonomous weapon systems, we must deepen our understanding of and multilateral discussions on the risks and challenges that they present and adopt the necessary regulatory and principled measures. States need to move forward in responsibly addressing such issues for the benefit of current and future generations. International law already provides us with the legal foundation. We are called on to regulate how such new technologies are applied by using that foundation. Colombia is a co-sponsor of the joint statement on lethal autonomous weapons systems submitted by Austria.

**Mr. Tchalaré (Togo)** (*spoke in French*): At the outset, the Togolese delegation would like to commend your able leadership, Sir, and the skill with which you are guiding the work of the First Committee, and reiterates its support for the success of your term.

My delegation aligns itself with the statements delivered by the representatives of Nigeria and Indonesia on behalf of the Group of African States and the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, respectively (see A/C.1/77/PV.16), and I would like to make the following points in my national capacity.

In keeping with its commitment to sustainable peace, security and development, my country has always prioritized the fight against the illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons (SALW). That scourge undermines the efforts of our countries' Governments to achieve stability and progress. In that regard, Togo welcomes the interest that the issue has garnered at the international level, in particular at the United Nations, especially as the subregion of West Africa, which is implicated, is subject to growing insecurity that increasingly affects coastal States, including my own.

Togo reaffirms its commitment to the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, the Programme of Action on Small Arms and the International Tracing Instrument, the steady implementation of which at the national, regional and global levels will contribute significantly to preventing, combating and eliminating the illicit trade in SALW in all its aspects. In that regard, we welcome the efforts that are being made at every level in accordance with resolution 76/232 of 24 December 2021. In recognition of the importance of the fight against the illicit trade in SALW, Togo submitted its report this year, which includes the actions and measures taken in the framework of the implementation of the Programme of Action. My country also adopted a national action plan aimed at improving knowledge of such weapons' categories, based on a reliable database, building and developing cooperation, coordination and information-sharing among stakeholders at the national, regional and global levels, and uniting citizens against SALW. In addition, my country has strict regulations that govern international transfers, stockpile management, marking and record-keeping with regard to SALW. In accordance with national laws, there are also measures for deterring and punishing those responsible for the illicit trade in SALW.

International cooperation and assistance are important tools in the fight against the illicit trade in SALW. My delegation welcomes the initiatives undertaken at the international level to support developing countries in particular, especially with regard to capacity-building and the improvement of modalities and procedures for international cooperation and assistance. In that regard, my country welcomes the assistance it receives from the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa, based in Lomé. I would like to take this opportunity to commend the positive cooperation between the Regional Centre and the Togolese authorities, particularly within the framework of the project entitled “Technical assistance for physical security and stockpile management, marking and destruction of small arms and light weapons and related ammunition in Togo”, which is also financed by the Japanese Government. Similarly, my country benefited from technical assistance from the Ammunition Management Advisory Team in the safe and secure management of weapons stockpiles in 2021, and in the same year was also the beneficiary of a baseline assessment of arms management at the national level conducted by the United Nations.

I would like to reiterate my country’s satisfaction with the consensus adoption of the final document of the eighth 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, and I hope that its recommendations are implemented. I remain confident that the forthcoming deliberations on the issue will enable us to make significant progress in overcoming the existing challenges.

**Mr. Stepanek** (Czechia): The Czech Republic fully aligns itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union (see A/C.1/77/PV.16).

We once again condemn in the strongest possible terms the Russian aggression against Ukraine, which represents an unjustifiable breach of the Charter of the United Nations and international law, including international humanitarian and international human rights law.

As a member of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) Management Committee, the Czech Republic continues to support the process of the universalization and full implementation of the ATT. We regret that some important arms producers have not yet joined the

ATT. Our common goal should be to achieve greater responsibility and transparency in the international arms trade. We highly value the outcome of the eighth Conference of States Parties to the Treaty, which was held in Geneva in August and was well attended, including by many international organizations and numerous other relevant stakeholders. The Czech Republic welcomes the discussions on post-shipment controls and post-delivery coordination as an effective means of diversion control. With reference to the reporting and information exchange, we are of the view that they should not bring about any additional burden beyond the obligations stemming directly from the ATT, and at the same time they should be mutually reinforcing with the reporting to the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms. Taking due note of the alarming financial situation of the ATT, we appeal to all its States parties to fulfil their financial obligations in full and on time. To support national implementation, we remain ready to further contribute to the ATT’s voluntary trust fund.

The Czech Republic reiterates its support for the goals of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention and the Convention on Cluster Munitions. The Czech Republic has, to date, provided its assistance to mine action, for instance in Afghanistan, Jordan, Iraq, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Ukraine. We recognize the good progress achieved in those areas. Anti-personnel mines and cluster munitions cause immense suffering, which have been aggravated in the ongoing war waged by Russia against Ukraine. We call on the international community to redouble its efforts in the areas of victim assistance, risk education, mine stockpile destruction, explosive remnants of war and cluster munitions clearance in conflict areas, including those currently posing a danger in the territory of Ukraine.

The Czech Republic stands firmly by the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW). International endeavours must continue to address the humanitarian impact of conventional weapons and ammunitions. We therefore appreciate all efforts to promote the universalization of the Convention. It is also important to keep the Convention responsive to new technological advances. We therefore welcome further work on the issues of lethal autonomous weapons systems. In our view, it is indispensable for the CCW’s high contracting parties to have sufficient guidance on how to ensure that any new weapon, means or method of warfare is in compliance with international humanitarian law,

which should remain our primary objective under all circumstances.

We therefore highly value the Political Declaration on Strengthening the Protection of Civilians from the Humanitarian Consequences Arising from the Use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas, which was adopted in June. That is real proof that despite the current unfavourable milieu, States are in a position and willing to develop a political declaration to enhance the protection of civilians in populated areas during conflict and to reduce the humanitarian harm arising from the use of explosive weapons with wide-area effects. Many people around the globe suffer each year from the effects of illicit trafficking in firearms. The Czech Republic believes that strong regulations covering conventional weapons, including small arms and light weapons and their ammunition, parts and components, should be supported. The Czech Republic has developed an effective system to control arms exports, as well as dual-use goods, and continues to enhance its mechanisms of control and prevention of diversion, in accordance with international standards.

Our country fully meets its international commitments in the field of arms control and remains adherent to compliance policy. The Czech Republic welcomes the outcomes 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, including the International Tracing Instrument requiring States to ensure that weapons are properly marked and their records maintained. We are supportive of the recommendations of the Group of Governmental Experts on Arms Brokering and closely follow the work of the Open-ended Working Group on Conventional Ammunition, which was established pursuant to resolution 76/233 to elaborate a set of political commitments as a new global framework that will address existing gaps in through-life ammunition management, including international cooperation and assistance.

**Ms. Narayanan** (India): In the increasingly turbulent global security environment, it is important to reaffirm our collective commitment to disarmament and arms control instruments, including the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW), the unique structure of which aims to ensure flexibility in dealing with new developments in armed conflicts and weapons technologies. India is fully committed to the CCW and the humanitarian principles enshrined in the

Convention and is a party to all five protocols to the CCW. We strongly believe that the universalization of the Convention is critical for its full and effective implementation. India participated constructively in the sixth Review Conference of the High Contracting Parties to the CCW, held last year. We hope that our work in the intersessional period will further strengthen the Convention.

We have fulfilled our obligations under Amended Protocol II, including with respect to the non-production of non-detectable mines, as well as rendering all anti-personnel mines detectable. We firmly believe that Amended Protocol II strikes a balance between humanitarian concerns on landmines and legitimate defence requirements, particularly of States with long borders. Amended Protocol II also serves as an appropriate framework for addressing the issue of improvised explosive devices (IEDs), which are often deployed by non-State actors, including terrorists and illegal armed groups. India welcomes the adoption of the declaration on IEDs at the sixth Review Conference of the CCW. Having fought the menace of the use of IEDs by armed non-State actors, India accords high priority to IED threat mitigation and victim assistance and is ready to share best practices with fellow States.

India is a leading contributor to United Nations peacekeeping operations and has extended assistance to international demining and rehabilitation efforts. As an original signatory to Protocol V, India is deeply aware of the grave humanitarian concerns caused by the explosive remnants of war and is fully committed to cooperation and assistance towards the full implementation of Protocol V. Our ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities underscores the importance we attach to victim assistance. The India for Humanity initiative, which was launched as part of the 150th birth anniversary celebrations of Mahatma Gandhi, has conducted several limb fitment camps, with more than 6,500 artificial limbs fitted over the past few years in various countries. The prosthetic limb, popularly known as the Jaipur Foot, has gained recognition worldwide for its efficacy, safety and cost-effectiveness. The programme was recently extended to March 2023.

India highlights the need for all Member States to make efforts in the area of sharing new technologies that can be deployed for the removal or deactivation of explosive remnants of war. India supports continued deliberations on lethal autonomous weapons systems



within the framework of the CCW. We believe that addressing the issue of lethal autonomous weapons systems in the framework of the CCW strengthens the Convention and underlines that it is capable of responding meaningfully to evolving new technologies that are applicable to armed conflict in the twenty-first century. It is imperative that we develop a common, considered and shared understanding of the concepts before we take any decisive steps.

India participates as an observer in the meetings of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention and looks forward to its participation in the twentieth meeting of States parties, to be held later this year. India welcomes the consensus-based outcome document of the eighth 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 recognized the adverse effects of the illicit arms trade, including exacerbating terrorism, and emphasized the role of United Nations instruments in addressing the threat posed by terrorism.

We are pleased that the Group of Governmental Experts on the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms, which is currently chaired by India, adopted a consensus-based report this year. We invite all United Nations Member States to participate in reporting their international transfers of conventional arms to the Register, which is a valuable voluntary transparency and confidence-building mechanism that allows countries to report on their international transfers of conventional arms.

India also participates in the work of the Open-ended Working Group on Conventional Ammunition and underscores the need to address the diversion of conventional ammunition to illicit markets, illegal armed groups, terrorists, criminals and other unauthorized recipients. We extend our support for refining, reviewing and strengthening guidance under the International Ammunition Technical Guidelines in that area. As a member of the Wassenaar Arrangement, India remains committed to working towards the further strengthening of the global non-proliferation architecture in the area of conventional weapons and related dual-use goods and technologies. In that regard, we are pleased to inform the Committee that India will assume the plenary chairpersonship of the Wassenaar Arrangement for the year 2023. India looks forward to

working with all Member States to make meaningful progress in that area.

**Mrs. González López** (El Salvador) (*spoke in Spanish*): My country is determined to combat the effects of armed violence and the irresponsible use of firearms, which continues to claim the lives of victims around the world. El Salvador is firmly committed to 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 is why it actively participated in the eighth Biennial Meeting of States in June. We commend the results of that meeting, as significant progress was made on the outcome document. In the light of those important results, El Salvador wishes to highlight the following elements that we deem relevant.

First, we are concerned by the forecasts with regard to the use of new technologies in the manufacture and design of small arms and light weapons, including those privately manufactured, as well as the challenges that presents, especially with regard to the marking, record-keeping and tracing provisions stipulated in the International Tracing Instrument (ITI). In addition, we emphasize the need to redouble cooperation among States in order to enhance the national capacities and expertise to effectively address those challenges.

Secondly, we highlight the recommendations to the fourth review conference of the Programme of Action to resume the discussion of the establishment of an open-ended technical expert group to address important issues regarding new technologies in the field of small arms and light weapons.

Thirdly, we consider it essential to implement a cross-cutting gender approach in order to address the differentiated impacts of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons on different population groups. We also stress the importance of collecting, where possible, data disaggregated by sex, as well as other variables or parameters for understanding specific phenomena in order to target public policies, and the need for the full, meaningful and effective participation of women in the implementation of the Programme of Action and the ITI.

Fourthly, we welcome the establishment of the annual small arms and light weapons training programme, which will begin in 2024 and strengthen precisely what we have already highlighted, including the technical knowledge and experience of Government

personnel responsible for the implementation of the Programme of Action and the ITI, particularly for developing countries. In that regard, we thank Japan, South Africa and especially Colombia for their tireless work to that end, and we are pleased to be a lead co-sponsor of draft resolution A/C.1/77/L.50, entitled “The illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects”.

We would like to once again express our interest in ensuring that the issue of ammunition be considered within the provisions of the Programme of Action. As we indicated on previous occasions, ammunition is a necessary component of the functioning of weapons. It is that central element that makes a firearm lethal, which is why we believe in the need for a holistic approach to tackling that scourge.

We would like to mention our cooperating partners from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime Global Firearms Programme, the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research and the Organization of American States Department of Public Security, which work with El Salvador on technical and institutional capacity-building efforts, the exchange of best practices and the acquisition of specialized machinery for the marking, record-keeping and tracing of weapons, and the provision of support for the seizure and destruction of weapons and ammunition. Those activities, in conjunction with national campaigns on preventing and reducing violence, including campaigns on the prevention of the use of firearms in the national education system, are actions that help to curtail the trafficking of small arms and light weapons and highlight the dangers of their proliferation. We also wish to express our appreciation for the tremendous work done by civil society organizations, academia, think tanks and others, who provide us with excellent input and valuable information that contributes to our work on conventional arms and security.

**Ms. Cho** (Republic of Korea): As the Secretary-General noted in his Agenda for Disarmament, owing to the widespread availability of conventional weapons, armed conflicts have become more protracted, complex, disruptive and difficult to recover from. The Republic of Korea reiterates its sincere commitment to working closely with the international community to address the challenges posed by conventional weapons. The Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) seeks to establish the highest

possible common standards for the conventional arms trade with a view to reducing human suffering and violence against women and children. The ATT has been a milestone achievement in fostering a well-regulated legal trade in arms, while preventing their illicit trade and diversion. As a strong supporter of the ATT, the Republic of Korea has actively participated in the forum and recently assumed the presidency of its ninth Conference of States Parties. Furthermore, as part of our endeavour to strengthen the implementation and universalization of the Treaty, the Republic of Korea has also made financial contributions to the Voluntary Trust Fund and its sponsorship programme in order to support States in their effective implementation of the ATT.

We welcome the discussion at the eighth Conference of States Parties to the ATT of the President’s working paper on post-shipment controls, which could contribute to preventing diversion, and we hope to engage in further discussions within the ATT. The Republic of Korea also appreciates the progress made on the voluntary basic guide to establishing a national control system in assisting States parties and hopes to continue that work. We also welcome the inaugural meeting of the Diversion Information Exchange Forum, through which we can share relevant information contributing to safeguarding against potential diversions. My delegation would like to take this opportunity to draw members’ attention to draft resolution A/C.1/77/L.39 on the ATT, which the Republic of Korea has the honour to submit in its capacity as the current President of the ninth Conference of States Parties. We look forward to the extensive support of Member States for the draft resolution.

We recognize that the illicit trade of small arms and light weapons is interconnected with other areas, including international peace and security, terrorism, domestic and transnational organized crimes, drugs, women and children’s rights and socioeconomic development. My delegation would like to reiterate its commitment to the 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. We welcome the consensus outcome document of the eighth Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action, which was held in June.

The Republic of Korea remains committed to the framework of the Convention on Certain Conventional

Weapons (CCW), which strikes a balance between the security concerns and humanitarian considerations of States parties. The issue of emerging technologies in the area of lethal autonomous weapon systems has certainly been one of the focuses of our discussions within the CCW framework over the past few years. We welcome the progress made this year by the Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) on Emerging Technologies in the Area of Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems through the adoption of its report of the 2022 session, and we hope to continue our efforts through the GGE process until a consensus is reached on normative and operative frameworks on emerging technologies in the areas of lethal autonomous weapons systems.

Moreover, in sharing the concern on the devastating impact of the use of explosive weapons in populated areas, the Republic of Korea looks forward to the high-level conference to be held in Dublin on 18 November, at which we will endorse the Political Declaration on Strengthening the Protection of Civilians from the Humanitarian Consequences Arising from the Use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas. The Republic of Korea aligns itself with the objectives and purposes of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, although it has yet to accede to the Ottawa Convention, given its unique security situation on the Korean peninsula. Accordingly, the Republic of Korea reaffirms that as a State party to the Protocol on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Mines, Booby Traps and Other Devices, it has fully complied with its obligations and relevant norms. We also participate in the international cooperation efforts to support those affected by landmines through multilateral channels, including the Voluntary Trust Fund for Assistance in Mine Action and the International Trust Fund for Enhancing Human Security, as well as through bilateral capacity-building programmes to assist mine-affected populations and communities. We will continue to work closely with the international community in that area.

**Mr. Yakut (Türkiye):** Uncontrolled flows of conventional weapons continue to fuel armed conflicts, terrorism and organized crime, while undermining stability and development efforts in many parts of the world. Considering the enormous humanitarian toll they cause, the proliferation of small arms and light weapons deserves no less attention than the dangers posed by weapons of mass destruction. Türkiye is particularly concerned with the linkage between the illicit trade

in small arms and light weapons and terrorism and organized crime, which is why we remain resolute in our efforts to advance international cooperation to combat and eradicate the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and their ammunition.

In that context, Türkiye strongly supports the robust, effective and comprehensive implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. We welcome the consecutive successful consensus outcomes achieved at the seventh and eighth Biennial Meetings of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action. In the lead-up to the fourth Review Conference on the Programme of Action, we will be looking forward to continuing our efforts to strengthen international cooperation and capacity-building assistance, as well as addressing the challenges caused by the new developments in small arms and light weapons manufacturing, technology and design. Let me also underline our support for further strengthening the International Tracing Instrument.

In our view, the Arms Trade Treaty also represents an important contribution to the regulation of the international trade in conventional arms. Information-sharing and transparency in armaments is a crucial confidence-building measure and one of the best ways to prevent diversion. Türkiye has submitted annual reports on its transfers of major conventional arms and small arms and light weapons to the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms. We encourage all States, particularly Arms Trade Treaty States parties, to make their annual reports publicly available. We clearly cannot separate the risk of the proliferation of conventional weapons from the safety and security of their ammunition. Türkiye welcomes the ongoing work of the Open-ended Working Group on Conventional Ammunition and looks forward to its successful outcome. As part of its commitments under the export control regimes, Türkiye diligently implements a robust export control mechanism, including through the Wassenaar Arrangement.

Having marked its twenty-fifth anniversary this year, the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction continues to play a key role in ending the suffering and casualties caused by anti-personnel mines. Türkiye takes its commitments under the Convention seriously and calls for its universalization. In addition, the Convention on Certain

Conventional Weapons (CCW) is an indispensable part of international law on conventional weapons with indiscriminate effects. Türkiye fully implements the Convention and its annexed Protocols, to which it is a party, and encourages adherence to that fundamental international regime.

Furthermore, issues such as improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and lethal autonomous weapons systems continue to be important. Türkiye is concerned by the increasing impact of IED attacks worldwide, in particular through the perpetration of terrorist acts. We believe that the United Nations has an important role to play in dealing with IED threats. Lastly, we also believe that the development and use of autonomous weapons systems that do not have meaningful human control are undesirable and conflict with international humanitarian law. Humans, as commanders and operators, have to be involved in the decision loop and bear the ultimate responsibility when dealing with decisions of life and death.

**Ms. Estrada Girón** (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): Small arms and light weapons and their proliferation and illicit trafficking cause the deaths of hundreds of people around the world each year, fuelling conflict and exacerbating violence. The production of those weapons and their ammunition continues to increase, and their diversion to the illicit market continues to be an increasingly complex problem. The diversion of weapons contributes to drug trafficking and the existence of organized crime. It makes people more vulnerable and hinders the creation of an environment conducive to the promotion of human, economic and sustainable development. Guatemala believes that the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) is a milestone in the regulation of the international trade in conventional weapons. We welcomed its adoption eight years ago, in the belief that it would have a significant impact on the security of our inhabitants. Let us not forget that the central objective of the Treaty is to save human lives by effectively regulating weapons and preventing their diversion. We reiterate our conviction that the success of the ATT depends on the good faith of States, including the producer, exporter and importer States, in effectively implementing each and every provision of the Treaty. We insist that the obligations of States parties to that instrument go beyond just financial contributions.

With regard to the achievements of the eighth 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 and its International Tracing Instrument, my delegation welcomes the outcome document adopted by consensus. Although there are still issues to be included — such as ammunition, strengthening the references to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, women and peace and security, and synergies with other regional and international instruments, among other issues — we believe that the outcome document is a good basis for our countries' discussions at the upcoming Programme of Action review conference.

We view as positive the establishment of a fellowship training programme to strengthen technical knowledge and build the capacity of countries, in particular developing countries, in areas relating to small arms and light weapons. We thank the delegations of Colombia, Japan and South Africa for their efforts and for including such language in draft resolution A/C.1/77/L.50 on the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects. We would like to highlight in particular the work done by Colombia. We also have a special interest in the Open-ended Working Group on Conventional Ammunition, as well as the need to adopt a comprehensive approach to address the life-cycle management of conventional ammunition that considers the interrelationship between the measures aimed at preventing explosions and those intended to prevent the diversion of conventional ammunition. In that regard, we believe that in order to develop a framework of political commitments that are effective and efficient, it is crucial that the needs and situation of each country and region be taken into account in the drafting of the final document. Guatemala particularly stresses the need to explicitly incorporate the issue of small arms and light weapons ammunition.

We also recall the importance of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction, also known as the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Treaty, and call on all non-signatory States to sign and ratify it.

In addition to the above, Guatemala strongly condemns the use of cluster munitions by any actor and under any circumstances. Such use constitutes a violation of the principles enshrined in international law and international humanitarian law.



We would like to express our concern about the use of explosive weapons in densely populated areas. As recent events have shown, the consequences of their use are devastating and their deleterious effects are often indiscriminate. Guatemala condemns the use of any weapon with indiscriminate effects, which constitutes a violation of international humanitarian law. Scientific and commercial advances in artificial intelligence and the use of technology for the development of new weapons must therefore be prohibited by means of a legally binding instrument. So-called killer robots or lethal autonomous weapons pose a grave danger to humankind if not controlled by a human being.

In conclusion, the current situation poses significant challenges to international peace and security. The constant suffering and loss of human lives caused by the use of conventional weapons spur Guatemala to continue working actively and proactively in these deliberations.

**Ms. Nagai** (Japan): As we all know far too well, the world witnessed countless military attacks and violent incidents over the past 12 months, resulting in numerous civilian deaths, massive displacement and the separation of families. Conventional arms used in warfare were to blame for those tragedies. I would therefore like to emphasize the importance of effective arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation of conventional weapons and reiterate the pressing need for the universalization of the relevant treaties.

In that respect, Japan extends its warm welcome to the Philippines and Gabon for their accession to the Arms Trade Treaty, and to Malawi for its accession to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW). Japan would like to take this opportunity to encourage all Member States to join, if they have not yet done so, and implement the legal instruments on conventional arms control and disarmament.

It is also with that sense of urgency that Japan, as chair of the Committee on the Enhancement of Cooperation and Assistance of the Meeting of the States Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction, also known as the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, is promoting international cooperation for mine action. Japan also nationally supports action against mines, cluster munitions and unexploded ordnance, as well as the collection and disposal of small arms and light

weapons around the world. In 2021, our contribution in those areas exceeded \$41 million.

This year, Japan, alongside Colombia and South Africa, once again submitted to the First Committee a draft resolution on the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects (A/C.1/77/L.50), which was drawn from the successful outcome of the eighth 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 this year. Japan hopes that a consensus adoption of this draft resolution will demonstrate our united determination to tackle this problem.

Japan highly values the CCW as a multilateral regulatory framework for conventional weapons and international humanitarian law and welcomes the outcome of its sixth Review Conference in December, as well as the adoption of the updated Declaration on Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) at the twenty-third Annual Conference of Amended Protocol II to the CCW, which Japan had the honour to chair. We support the draft resolution on IEDs, submitted by France and Australia (A/C.1/77/L.41).

Japan recognizes the meaningful results achieved by the Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) in the discussion on emerging technologies in the area of lethal autonomous weapons systems over the past years as one of the key topics under the CCW. Despite the sensitivity and complexity of that issue, intensive deliberations at the GGE meetings have significantly contributed to fostering a basis for common understanding. Japan believes it beneficial for the High Contracting Parties to continue the discussion on lethal autonomous weapon systems step by step within the CCW framework. Japan also welcomes the many proposals submitted to the GGE this year in order to advance such discussion. Japan will continue to actively contribute to international rule-making in that regard.

Lastly, Japan supports the Political Declaration on Strengthening the Protection of Civilians from the Humanitarian Consequences Arising from the Use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas and looks forward to the endorsement of an outcome declaration in Dublin in November.

In conclusion, Japan believes it imperative for all Member States to stand united to address the severe challenges that we all face. Japan remains committed

to continuing its contribution and stands ready to work with other Member States, international organizations and civil society to move things forward.

A full version of this statement will be available on the website.

**Mr. Alhashim** (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank you, Mr. Chair, and the other members of the Bureau for their efforts in guiding the deliberations of the First Committee during this session.

My delegation aligns itself with the statement made by the representative of Indonesia, on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, and with the statement made by the representative of the brotherly country of Iraq, on behalf of the Group of Arab States (see A/C.1/77/PV.16).

On the issue of conventional weapons, we would like to reiterate our consistent position with regard to combating the illegal trafficking of small arms and light weapons. This is part of our commitment to global peace and stability. We are therefore making efforts to avoid the economic, societal and peace implications of the dissemination of such arms without undermining the sovereign right of States to own, export and import conventional weapons in order to ensure their security and territorial integrity.

In that context, Kuwait reiterates its commitment to the need to comprehensively implement the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. This international consensus-based instrument aims to strengthen trust among States and put an end to illicit arms trafficking, in consideration of the danger such weapons pose when they fall into the arms of non-State actors, who can then perpetrate terrorist acts.

In that context, the Kuwaiti authorities have created awareness-raising programmes to educate people on the danger posed by such weapons, the damage they can wreak and their destabilizing potential, with an eye to reducing crime.

On the Arms Trade Treaty, we call on all States to implement it in a balanced manner, in accordance with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and in respect of the legitimate right of all States to self-defence, all with an understanding of the need to strike a balance of responsibilities between the exporting and

importing States. That is particularly true with regard to the imbalance between production of and trade in conventional weapons among industrialized States and developing States.

The technological and technical advances are a double-edged sword. They have facilitated the possibility of manufacturing such weapons, in particular by non-State actors and groups. However, there are ways of countering such dangers. States should promote cooperation by sharing information and expertise particularly with regard to land and sea border security to make sure those weapons do not fall into the hands of terrorist groups. That could also be achieved through cooperation among all relevant parties with United Nation bodies in the implementation of relevant conventions and commitments.

Like many other countries in the world, Kuwait has gone through a very difficult time because of landmines that remained after its territories were liberated from the Iraqi occupation more than 30 years ago. Landmines have had humanitarian consequences, as they, together with the remnants of war, continue to kill civilians and increase the suffering of people around the world, even years after the end of wars. That is why we reaffirm the need to ensure that all States respect the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. Expertise should be exchanged and technical and financial assistance provided for the carrying out of mine clearance and for rehabilitating affected areas.

In conclusion, we value those important meetings and hope that this session of the First Committee will underline the need for continued dialogue and constructive discussions followed by tangible actions in line with the agreed results that lead to achieving security and stability for the entire world.

**Mr. Padilla** (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): We align ourselves with the statement made by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.

We reiterate our commitment to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and the Protocols annexed thereto to which we are a party. We uphold the legitimate right of States to manufacture, import and retain conventional weapons to meet their legitimate defence and security needs, in accordance with Article 51 of the United Nations Charter.

Double standards persist in the field of disarmament. At the same time that some producers continue to transfer conventional weapons to unauthorized non-State actors and divert them to the illicit market, they also seek to hinder developing countries from acquiring and using such weapons for legitimate self-defence purposes. Meanwhile, increasingly strategic, sophisticated and lethal conventional weapons continue to be developed, while the imbalance between the production and possession of and trade in these weapons deepen.

We reiterate our commitment to 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 as the international standard in this field. The Programme of Action was adopted by consensus, as were the outcome documents of its related review conferences. We support the establishment of a Fellowship Programme on small arms and light weapons, particularly for developing countries. We hope that this Programme will contribute to capacity-building for the implementation of the Programme of Action.

We underscore the full validity and effectiveness of the international instrument to enable States to reliably identify and trace illicit small arms and light weapons. Illegal transfers and diversions of small arms and light weapons to unauthorized non-State actors, the main source of illicit trafficking, must be stopped as a matter of urgency. The socioeconomic causes of this scourge must be addressed, including through cooperation and assistance to States that request it.

We reiterate that Cuba cannot support the Arms Trade Treaty, which sets out parameters for the approval and denial of arms transfers to Member States that are easily manipulated.

We advocate a ban on autonomous lethal weapons as soon as possible. Regulations are required for the use of weapons with some autonomy, particularly military strike drones.

Global military spending continues to grow at a dizzying and worrisome rate. It is exceeding for the first time the alarming figure of \$2 trillion. While millions of people live in extreme poverty and suffer from acute hunger, the main producers of conventional weapons are becoming exorbitantly rich. How much more we could do if those resources were allocated to health, education and sustainable development in our countries, as Commander-in-Chief Fidel Castro

Ruz often said. Instead of investing so much in the development of increasingly sophisticated weapons, those who have the resources should promote medical research and put the fruits of science in the service of humanity, creating instruments — not of death — but of health and life.

**Mrs. Tran** (Viet Nam): My delegation associates itself with the statements delivered by the representatives of Cambodia and Indonesia on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, respectively (see A/C.1/77/PV.16).

It is Viet Nam's view that progress on arms control on conventional weapons is part and parcel of our overall collective efforts aimed at maintaining international peace and security and ensuring national defence. Efforts in the implementation of all related international instruments and mechanisms should be in accordance with the fundamental principles of international law and the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, with States bearing the primary responsibility.

It is crucial that we address the issues related to conventional weapons with great care and balance. While emphasizing the principles of balance, consistency, non-discrimination and non-politicization when implementing relevant instruments, we reaffirm the sovereign rights of States to acquire, manufacture, export, import and retain conventional arms and relevant parts, components and ammunition for their legitimate self-defence and security needs.

The issue of dealing with the consequences of mines and bombs, especially in post-conflict situations, remains challenging. My delegation therefore continues to support the humanitarian objectives of the Convention on Cluster Munitions and the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, together with common efforts of the international community against the indiscriminate use of those weapons. As a member of the Security Council last year, Viet Nam initiated the adoption of a Security Council presidential statement reaffirming the need for continued mine actions across regions and recognizing international endeavours in this regard (S/PRST/2021/8). As a country that has been heavily affected by the explosive remnants of war, Viet Nam has been making every effort to address issues related to

explosive remnants of war with a view to ensuring safe livelihoods and development for the people, including implementing our national mine action plan for the period 2010–2025. We have worked closely with and are grateful for the kind support of international partners in addressing unexploded ordnance in Viet Nam.

We also share the concerns over the negative impact of the illicit trade and misuse of small arms and light weapons, which fuel conflicts, cause socioeconomic instability, hinder sustainable development and impose negative impacts on the international security environment. Viet Nam therefore supports the continued 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 further regional and international cooperation. My delegation welcomes the decision of the eighth Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action.

My delegation is convinced that international cooperation plays a crucial role in supporting developing countries in implementing their obligations and policy relating to conventional weapons. In that process, the promotion of the role and participation of women will contribute meaningfully to the implementation of the respective responsibilities, as well as long-term prospects for peace, stability and development across regions.

**The Chair:** I shall now call on those delegations that have requested to make statements in exercise of the right of reply. May I remind members that statements in the exercise of the right of reply are limited to five minutes for the first intervention and three minutes for the second intervention.

I give the floor to the representative of the European Union, in its capacity as observer.

**Mr. Karczmarz** (European Union): I feel obliged to respond to the statement by the representative of the Russian Federation in exercising its right of reply at the end of yesterday's meeting (see A/C.1/77/PV.16).

Three days ago, the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine submitted its report (see A/77/533) to the General Assembly, which reveals that war crimes and violations of human rights and international humanitarian law have been committed in Ukraine since 24 February. The Russian armed

forces are responsible for the vast majority of the violations identified.

The Commission found numerous cases in which Russian armed forces shot at civilians trying to flee to safety and obtain food or other necessities, which resulted in the killing or injury of the victims. In the cases documented, the victims wore civilian clothes, drove civilian cars and were unarmed. The reports about arbitrary executions, including summary executions in Bucha, Kyiv, Chernihiv, Kharkiv and Sumy regions, detentions, torture and other ill-treatment, sexual and gender-based violence, unlawful forcible transfers and the deportation of a significant number of Ukrainian civilians, including children, to territories under Russian military control and to Russia are shocking. In its war of aggression against Ukraine, Russia uses anti-personnel landmines and cluster munitions, as well as other explosive weapons, such as rockets, artillery shells and improvised explosive devices, against civilians.

This and last week's air and missile attacks by Russia deliberately targeted critical infrastructure and attempted to terrorize civilians in Kyiv and other Ukrainian cities. In that regard, the European Union (EU) condemns the delivery of Iranian drones to Russia and their deadly deployment in Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine.

In view of the gravity of the situation, yesterday the EU decided to include three individuals and one entity on the list of those subject to restrictive measures for undermining or threatening the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Ukraine. That is in view of their role in the development and delivery of drones used by Russia in its war against Ukraine. That decision is a sign of the EU's resolve to respond swiftly and decisively to Iran's actions supporting the Russian aggression against Ukraine. The EU will continue to respond to all actions in support of the Russian aggression.

We are devastated by the repeated discoveries of atrocities in liberated areas and the increasing horrific number of civilian casualties across the country. Minefields are left behind in places where the Russian armed forces have been present, making the delivery of humanitarian assistance impossible and endangering the lives of innocent people.

In order to ensure accountability, the EU actively supports the work of the International Criminal Court.



There can be no impunity for war crimes, crimes against humanity and crimes of genocide. Russia must be held accountable for such evident violations of international humanitarian law, which result in hundreds of civilian casualties every week.

**Mr. Grigoryan (Armenia):** I am compelled to take the floor to respond to the statement of the delegation of Azerbaijan. As usual, this forum was forced by the delegation just mentioned to hear a large amount of fabricated, false and provocative rhetoric. Obviously the intention behind such a disinformation campaign is to hide the blatant disregard and continuous violations by Azerbaijan of all norms existing in the area of conventional arms control from the attention of the international community. In that regard, allow to mention just a few points.

The security situation in our region continues to be characterized by an uncontrolled military build-up by Azerbaijan, the persistent aggressive rhetoric of its leadership, open territorial claims to Armenia and use of force against the sovereign territory of Armenia.

In 2020, from the first day of aggression against Nagorno-Karabakh as a part of its policy of spreading terror Azerbaijan widely used prohibited weapons, such as cluster munitions and incendiary weapons, to conduct targeted attacks against the civilian population and infrastructure, which is widely documented by Human Rights Watch, causing long-term, severe damage to both the peaceful population and the environment. More than 1,815 hectares of forest area were damaged as a result of the use of incendiary ammunition, probably containing chemical elements such as white phosphorus, by Azerbaijani armed forces.

The military offensive unleashed by Azerbaijan in September this year against the sovereign territory of Armenia involved the deliberate targeting of densely populated cities deep in the territory of my country in gross violation of the Geneva Conventions. Those attacks were preceded by the previous acts of aggression against the sovereign territory of Armenia in May, July and November 2021.

At the emergency meeting of the Security Council convened on 15 September at the formal request of Armenia, we heard calls by Council members with regard to the fact that strikes within the territory of Armenia were unacceptable, all military forces should urgently return to their initial positions and a complete ceasefire should be unconditionally observed (see

S/PV.9132). However, the Azerbaijani troops continue to remain inside the territory of Armenia, and the military build-up continues on Armenia's frontiers.

Grave violations of the conventional arms control regime and confidence-building measures by Azerbaijan have also posed a serious security threat. It exceeded its ceilings for four or five categories of major conventional arms established by the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe. For decades, Azerbaijani armed forces located along the borders have been completely excluded from inspection and verification, undermining the credibility of data provided by Azerbaijan and enabling it to concentrate a large amount of unverifiable forces and military equipment along the borders of Armenia.

The grave violations of the agreed confidence-building measures in the framework of the Vienna Document 1994 also include the conduct of large-scale military exercises without notification along the borders with Armenia.

For almost three decades, the people of Nagorno-Karabakh and border communities of Armenia have been severely affected by massive mine contamination as a result of Azerbaijan's military activities. Mine accidents have led to the killing and injury of many civilians, including children, and have significantly impeded socioeconomic development. Azerbaijan has consistently obstructed demining activities as part of its broader policy of obstructing the international community's humanitarian access to Nagorno-Karabakh. In 2016, Azerbaijan forced the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe to terminate those demining-related efforts.

In the aftermath of its aggression against Nagorno-Karabakh in 2020, Azerbaijan, facing international pressure on several humanitarian issues, including the release of hundreds of Armenian prisoners of war and civilians, brought this issue up for mere propaganda purposes in order to distract the attention of the international community from its heinous crimes.

**Mr. Balouji (Islamic Republic of Iran):** I must take the floor to exercise my delegation's right of reply and clarify our position concerning the irresponsible and false claims on the alleged use of Iranian drones (UAVs) in Ukraine. It is regrettable to observe this pattern of unfounded accusations, especially when Iran's actively neutral position on the conflict is not taken into account and despite all the constructive responses

we have offered in this regard. Allegations and claims made unilaterally and repeatedly will not become true; rather, they will just serve to demonstrate how arbitrary those accusations are.

I would like to reiterate the principled position of the Islamic Republic of Iran and categorically reject the unfounded allegations by Ukraine and the European Union that Iran has supplied UAVs for use in the conflict in Ukraine. It is regrettable that Ukraine — and, recently, a few other countries — overlook Iran's impartial position on the conflict and continue to base their claims and false statements on unsubstantiated public information. We are of the view that promoting a political agenda through the arbitrary dissemination of misinformation and misleading interpretations of relevant instruments for the purposes of manipulating the agendas and functions of international bodies must be stopped and avoided.

I would reiterate that Iran has never supplied — nor does it intend to supply — items, materials, equipment, goods and technology to any party to this armed conflict. Iran stands ready to engage constructively in joint technical and expert cooperation to clarify the unfounded accusations levelled against it.

However, Ukraine has taken only a politicized approach in response to our request for cooperation. The Islamic Republic of Iran categorically rejects and strongly condemns these baseless allegations. In fact, since the beginning of the crisis in Ukraine, the Islamic Republic of Iran has taken a clear, consistent and unwavering position that emphasizes that all States Members of the United Nations must fully respect the purposes and principles enshrined in the United Nations Charter and international law. The Islamic Republic of Iran has consistently supported peace and the end of the conflict in Ukraine, urging the parties to exercise restraint, avoid escalating tensions and engage in a meaningful process for addressing the root causes of the situation and settling their disputes through peaceful means. Iran has also urged the parties to uphold their obligations under international humanitarian law and conduct consultations to protect civilians and critical infrastructure from attacks or from becoming military targets.

The Islamic Republic of Iran supports the ongoing efforts of the United Nations to find a peaceful solution to the conflict. The United Nations should maintain objectivity and impartiality in order to play a responsible

and constructive role in the political settlement of the conflict in Ukraine.

**Mr. Vorontsov** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The Russian Federation categorically rejects the accusations against us by Western States, which are baseless. The NATO countries prefer to pass over their participation in the Ukrainian crisis in silence, but it is impossible to hide the truth. These countries seem to be competing with each other as they continue to pump the Kyiv regime with weapons and munitions, provide the regime with intelligence information, train its soldiers and guide them on how to conduct military operations. In this way, they are coming very close to the dangerous line of a direct military confrontation with Russia.

According to the updated data that was published by the Kiel Institute for the World Economy last week, overall military assistance to Ukraine from the West already exceeds \$42 billion, with more than half of that — \$28.3 billion — coming from Kyiv's main sponsor, the United States, which has no intention to stop. On 14 October 2022, it was announced that a new tranche — in the amount of \$725 million — would be given to Ukraine. European countries and institutions have already contributed \$8.5 billion.

The main beneficiary of the continuing bloodshed continues to be Washington, where the European countries are obligated to go to purchase military equipment and weaponry. Let me remind the First Committee that the Ukraine Democracy Defence Lend-Lease Act of 2022, which is responsible for 90 per cent of the credits granted to Kyiv, which it cannot afford, allows Washington to give orders to its own military-industrial complex and stem inflation by creating new jobs. We can say very confidently that a significant number of those weapons are already or will soon find themselves on the black market, where the monthly smuggling turnover is in excess of \$1 billion.

There was a new announcement made to provide Kyiv with military-purpose goods, and they will be used by the Ukrainian armed forces to continue its terrorist shelling of civilians of the Russian Federation. In this regard, we would like to underscore that the kinds of systems that countries of the European Union and NATO chose have proven themselves to be most lethal against the people of Donbas and the liberated territories. For example, the United States will give Kyiv another shipment of M142 HIMARS multiple-rocket launch systems and the high-precision

M31 Guided Multiple-Launch Rocket-System missiles that have, on a daily basis, destroyed civilian buildings and maimed or killed elderly, women and children. Ukraine is expecting a supply of American AGM-88 HARM tactical air-to-surface anti-radiation missiles, which are already being used by Ukrainian neo-Nazis to treacherously strike the residential areas of Belgorod, where there are no military facilities.

At the same time, we can see how diligently the military and political leadership of Ukraine is trying to accuse Russia of conducting its so-called “self-shelling”. But the truth will always out: last week, in his talk with Russian pranksters, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, Mr. Kuleba, confirmed that Kyiv is behind the attacks against Crimea and the Belgorod oblast. He also stated openly that the southern counter-offensive was planned by the Ukrainian army in direct cooperation with the United States and the United Kingdom.

France will provide Kyiv yet again with 155-millimeter Caesar self-propelled artillery systems that have also proven their power to attack residential and administrative buildings and schools. Through direct French support, the Ukrainian radicals and nationalists have killed no fewer than five people in Donetsk since June. Ten people were injured, and 64 buildings were destroyed.

Like Canada and the United States, Germany announced that it will be supplying Kyiv with 155-millimeter-calibre ammunition, which the Ukrainian armed forces are using every day to strike people in Donbas, Zaporizhzhya and Kherson, which have become regions of Russia. We also noted the statement made by the Head of the German Chancellery, Mr. Wolfgang Schmidt, who compared Kyiv’s expectations for the Leopard 2 tanks to the inspiration drawn from the V2 long-range ballistic missiles that the Nazis used at the end of the Second World War. It is amazing how easily Berlin has forgotten how much my country did to reunify the German people and how difficult our countries’ shared history has been in terms of coming together. Indeed, German weaponry is once again killing Russian people today. We keep hearing information about the possibility that Kyiv could be using prohibited methods and means of warfare in the Kherson area, including the preparation of a missile strike on the Kakhovka hydroelectric power dam. The Western inspirers of that criminal strategy are well known.

In conclusion, we therefore want to say that the supply of weapons to Ukraine by the EU and NATO countries makes them complicit in the aggression against Russia as well as in the war crimes and terrorist acts that Kyiv has been committing against civilians for the past eight years. Everyone involved will surely be held accountable and punished.

**Mr. Makarevich (Belarus)** (*spoke in Russian*): I would like to respond to the statement by the representative of Lithuania about Belarus. We consider the accusations directed at Belarus by our Lithuanian colleagues with regard to the events in Ukraine to be baseless. We feel compelled to say once again that the Belarusian armed forces have not taken part in the armed conflict in Ukraine, and our Head of State has repeatedly affirmed that. Minsk has always advocated and will continue to advocate for a peaceful resolution of the situation as soon as possible. The conflict is currently unfolding right next to our borders with our neighbours. We therefore pay a great deal of attention to security issues in the region, and we are making every effort to resolve the differences as soon as possible. We believe firmly that using diplomatic means through negotiations based on respect and mutual understanding is the only way to settle any conflict.

**Mr. Zlenko (Ukraine)**: The delegation of Ukraine would like to exercise its right of reply in response to statements made by the delegation of the Russian Federation yesterday (see A/C.1/77/PV.16) and today, as well as by the delegation of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Needless to say, we categorically reject any allegations made about our country by the Russian delegation.

From the start of its war on Ukraine, Russia has attacked us from the land, air and sea using various types of conventional weapons. It has targeted civilian objects and civilians and has destroyed a number of Ukraine’s cities and villages, some of which have been razed to the ground. The international community has seen the horrific images from various towns in Ukraine, including Borodyanka, Bucha and Izyum and many others. Mass graves were found after they were liberated from the occupiers. Russian armed forces are violating international humanitarian law, including the conventions that prohibit the use of certain types of weapons, such as the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and its Protocols, to which Russia is a party. To mention just a few such weapons, Russia is actively using booby traps, incendiary weapons and cluster munitions in violation of the main

principles of international humanitarian law, including those of humanity, distinction and proportionality. Russia's attacks are all indiscriminate, and it is also using civilians as human shields.

Regarding Russia's other allegations, it is clear that Russia attacked Ukrainian prisoners of war in Olenivka, which is a crime and a clear violation of the Geneva Convention. At the beginning of its war, Russia seized the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant, also in violation of international humanitarian law. In July, August and September, it began shelling the power station. Apart from that, more than 500 Russian military personnel are present at the station. In the context, the only way to ensure that there is no risk to nuclear safety and security is for those troops to immediately withdraw from the nuclear power plant. Russia should implement the relevant decisions of the International Atomic Energy Agency, which adopted one resolution this spring and another in the autumn. I also want to remind the Committee that the construction of the Crimean Bridge was condemned in a number of General Assembly resolutions on the problem of the militarization of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol in Ukraine.

With regard to the statement by the delegation of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Ukraine has never considered Iran to be an enemy. We did not hastily accuse Iran of supporting the Russian aggressor. When the first reports emerged, we tried to thoroughly investigate all the facts and evidence. Ukraine spared no effort in trying to persuade Iran to refrain from making that grave mistake. Unfortunately, Iran chose to ruin its relations with Ukraine and become Russia's accomplice.

Russia is now making intensive use of large-scale unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) of Iranian origin in its indiscriminate attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure in Ukraine. In September Ukraine's defence forces captured drones labelled Geran-2, which after technical examination appeared to be similar to Iranian Shahed-136 UAVs, capable of delivering payloads to targets at a range of more than 300 kilometres and fully corresponding to the technical parameters outlined in Security Council resolution 2231 (2015). However, there is even more worrisome information about Russia's clear intentions of continuing further attacks on Ukraine with Iran's advanced missile and UAV systems, which include ballistic missiles capable of striking targets at a range between 300 and 700 kilometres.

**Mr. Gurbanov (Azerbaijan):** It is particularly deplorable that we are faced with having to take the floor to refute Armenia's self-serving agenda. It is clear that Armenia is trying to distract international attention from its internationally wrongful acts. Armenia's unwillingness to further release maps of minefields has claimed many people's lives and threatens to kill many more. It is a fact that Armenia was and remains complicit in the deaths of civilians from landmines in the liberated territories of Azerbaijan.

Meanwhile, despite the ongoing diplomatic efforts towards the normalization of relations between the two States, initiated by Azerbaijan and supported by the international community, Armenia has continued its mine terrorism with the sole purpose of inflicting the maximum possible damage on the lives and health of the citizens of my country. That is indicative of the indiscriminate nature of Armenia's mining, in gross violation of the relevant international norms, and it demonstrates the true scale and gravity of the humanitarian threat that Azerbaijani civilians are facing. Armenia's aim is clear. It is seeking to impede post-conflict rehabilitation, reconstruction and humanitarian efforts in Azerbaijan's territories liberated from Armenian occupation, including by delaying the safe return of internally displaced persons to the homes that they have been deprived of for almost three decades. We demand that Armenia share accurate, complete and comprehensive information about the maps of all the minefields it has planted.

Regarding the use of white phosphorus ammunition by the Armenian armed forces against civilians, that was actually confirmed by facts during both the April 2016 battles and the 44-day Patriotic War, waged by Armenia itself. It is a matter of fact that Armenia targeted cities and civilians in Azerbaijan with missiles and artillery far from the conflict zone. The Republic of Azerbaijan documented all the war crimes committed by Armenia, that is, the use of ballistic missiles, cluster munitions and phosphorus munitions, in its armed attacks during the six-week war in 2020. Notably, under international humanitarian law, the firing of white phosphorous weapons on civilians and forests is prohibited by the Protocol on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Incendiary Weapons to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons. That grossly violated the requirements of the fundamental principles of the Convention on Biological Diversity and had the aim of causing colossal damage to the environment.



Meanwhile, Armenia used the formerly occupied territories of Azerbaijan to conceal its military activities from the relevant international and regional arms control and verification mechanisms, including the deployment of forces and the stockpiling of undeclared and uncontrolled military equipment, armaments and ammunition on our territories.

Azerbaijan resolutely responded in order to protect its people and restore its territorial integrity, acting exclusively on its sovereign soil, in full conformity with the Charter of the United Nations and international law. Azerbaijan did not unleash aggression against anyone. The assertion of the opposite is contrary not only to international law, but also to the resolutions adopted by the General Assembly and the Security Council.

**Mr. Turner** (United States of America): I too would like to respond to the comments of our Russian colleague, the persistence and insistence of which are in inverse proportion to their credibility. He put together an impressive enumeration of statistics about the assistance that is being provided to Ukraine in order to help it to defend itself, which, to my mind at least, is a tribute to the transparency with which the United States and a number of other countries have assisted Ukraine at this moment of peril. I would contrast that with the complete lack of transparency on the eve of the Russian invasion of 24 February, when the Russians were accusing us and others of being completely hysterical about the possibility that Russia would be invading the territory of a neighbour the very next day.

I have a similar comment with regard to the complaint about the transfer of high-precision military weapons. Of course, the purpose of using high-precision weapons is to target military targets. It is not to target civilians. That too contrasts with the Russian practice of indiscriminate use of force. I would also add that the Russian brutality throughout this war has been, and is being, well documented and will be scrutinized very carefully.

Finally, I would just like to recall for everyone that it was only a few days ago that the General Assembly adopted resolution ES-11/4 with 143 votes in support of Ukraine's territorial integrity and sovereignty. In opposing that resolution, Russia was joined by only four other countries, none of which are known as standard-bearers for the democratic international order.

**The Chair:** We have almost exhausted the time available for this meeting — perhaps we have exhausted

our time. There is a request for a second right of reply. I am afraid that representatives will have to confine their statements to one minute, and we will not have the benefit of interpretation, as the interpreters have to leave us now. Subject to those conditions, I now give the floor to those representatives who wish to exercise their second right of reply.

**Mr. Balouji** (Islamic Republic of Iran): As the second right of reply, and in response to the statement of the Ukrainian colleague, I would like to once again highlight that Iran's position on the ongoing conflict in Ukraine is crystal clear. We supported, and continue to support, the peaceful settlement of that feud, and we asked our Ukrainian colleagues to stop raising any unsubstantiated and arbitrary allegations about Iran. As I have repeatedly mentioned, we invite Ukraine to cooperate with us technically and at the expert level to clarify those claims. Our position is therefore clear, and we hope that this will be taken seriously.

**Mr. Vorontsov** (Russian Federation): I will be very brief. First of all, I would like to reject all the allegations against my country from the delegations of Ukraine and the United States. I would like to say, and I stress, that the Russian forces are doing their job in full conformity with international law, including international humanitarian law. It is absolutely in line with the Charter of the United Nations and in accordance with Article 51 of the Charter. That is how the special military operation is being fulfilled in Ukraine. We would also like to say that the Russian Ministry of Defence is completely transparent in its activities, and every day it produces a briefing in order to inform everyone about the military activities in the context of the special military operation.

**Mr. Grigoryan** (Armenia): I will be brief. Throughout the years, Azerbaijan has attempted to justify its non-compliance with the conventional arms control regimes under the pretext of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Ironically, at the same time, Azerbaijan was the side that rejected all the mediators' proposals aimed at establishing confidence- and security-building mechanisms, including in the area of demining in conflict zones. That demonstrates that the real intention was, and is, to use the pretext to continue its military massive build-up and pursue its policy of aggression.

**Mr. Gurbanov** (Azerbaijan): We see that the delegation of Armenia has set a clear goal for itself.

Needless to say, that is counterproductive. Armenia must abandon its provocation and absurd narratives, fully abide by its international obligations and commit to the normalization of inter-State relations based on international law. We reiterate our demand to Armenia with regard to presenting the complete information about the minefields. That will also contribute to confidence-building between the two countries, as well as the normalization process between our countries.

**The Chair:** We have exhausted the time available for this meeting. I would like to remind members that on Tuesday, 25 October, at the end of its morning meeting, the Committee will hold its traditional certificate award ceremony for graduating Disarmament Fellows.

In accordance with the decision taken earlier today, the Committee will reconvene on Monday morning in this conference room to continue the thematic discussion under the cluster “Conventional weapons”.

*The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.*