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97th plenary meeting
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Official Records

President: Mr. Kőrösi (Hungary)

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

High-level meeting to commemorate and promote the International Day against Nuclear Tests

Agenda item 99 (*continued*)

General and complete disarmament

The President: In accordance with resolution 72/51, of 4 December 2017, the General Assembly will begin its high-level meeting to commemorate and promote the International Day against Nuclear Tests. I will now deliver a statement from the rostrum.

Statement by the President

The President: These were our words in 2010, when the General Assembly declared 29 August the International Day against Nuclear Tests: “Every effort should be made to end nuclear tests” (resolution 64/35, *preambular par. 2*).

Yet there is little reason to celebrate in the Assembly today. Heightened distrust, geopolitical competition and a growing number of armed conflicts have only increased the dangers in our world, particularly when we consider the regular threats we are hearing of resorting to a nuclear strike in the ongoing war against Ukraine. That has rightly raised the alarm, but what has been our response? Global military spending reached a record \$2.2 trillion in 2022. We see many signs that nuclear stockpiles and capabilities are growing, contravening the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. Does it make any sense to threaten

a neighbouring country with a nuclear strike? Has that approach reduced the number of conflicts? Are we now safer? Not at all.

We are closer than at any other time this century to global catastrophe, and yet we fail to see the terrifying trap that we have set for humankind by betting on nuclear weapons. When public funds are diverted in that way and our own words are ignored, we have a duty to ask how serious our pledges to focus on overcoming poverty and curbing pollution, climate change and biodiversity loss are. Will we protect our newest human right — the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment — or are our lofty pledges nothing but words? Our investment in and ongoing modernization of nuclear weapons are simply incompatible with our goals, aspirations and promises.

We need a human-centred approach to disarmament — one focused on preventing suffering and pointless environmental destruction and implemented through an inclusive and consistent multilateral process. Many States represented here have worked tirelessly to bring about an end to nuclear tests. I commend Kazakhstan for leading those efforts and initiating the declaration of the International Day. We cannot allow the dangers to grow. The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) is a key part of the international disarmament structure. It has created a powerful norm against nuclear testing. But its failure to enter into force, 27 years after its adoption, is a serious loophole in our global framework and a stark reminder that we have unfinished business. I call on the remaining annex 2 countries to finally sign and ratify the CTBT, follow

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the lead of the 34 annex 2 nations that have already done so and join the overwhelming majority supporting the CTBT.

It is our duty to ensure that the ban on nuclear testing is legally binding for all States. We need the right policies and safeguards to protect us against mistakes and poor decision-making. We must remember that the use of any nuclear weapon for any purpose will immediately spiral out of control and that the possibility of a so-called limited nuclear war does not exist. But there is no limit to the responsibility of those trying to familiarize the public with that notion without telling the truth of the consequences of a nuclear holocaust. For the safety of everyone around the globe, we must continue working towards a world free from the nuclear threat.

Teruko Yahata was 8 years old when the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima. Today, at 85, during her presentations to global audiences about the dreadful power of a nuclear blast, she asks, “Who is important to you? What do you want to protect?” We must learn from history, especially at such a moment, fraught with so many dangers, for the sake of all who have suffered from nuclear testing or nuclear detonations, and for the sake of our loved ones and future generations. It is time to prevent global nuclear destruction. It is time to end the threat of our collective suicide. That can be our legacy.

In accordance with rule 70 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, I now invite Mrs. Izumi Nakamitsu, Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, to address the Assembly on behalf of the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. António Guterres.

Mrs. Nakamitsu: At the outset, I would like to express my gratitude to the Member States, under the President of the General Assembly, His Excellency Mr. Csaba Kőrösi, for bringing us together for this significant annual observance. I would also like to convey my sincere appreciation to the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan for its unwavering commitment to raising awareness about the perilous consequences of nuclear testing.

It is with a sense of urgency that I stand before the Assembly on this International Day against Nuclear Tests. The norm against the testing of nuclear weapons is strong. Only one State has dared to violate it in the course of this century. The Comprehensive Nuclear-

Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) remains a monumental testament to our united resolve to consign nuclear tests to history and protect both humankind and our environment from their destructive consequences. The International Monitoring System has already proved its worth. And with 186 signatories and 178 ratifying States, the CTBT is a load-bearing pillar of the disarmament and non-proliferation regime. I welcome the recent ratifications of the CTBT by Equatorial Guinea, Sao Tome and Principe, Solomon Islands and Sri Lanka, and I thank the Provisional Technical Secretariat for its enduring commitment to universalizing the Treaty. Although it has yet to enter into force, it has nonetheless provided a foundation for the global taboo against nuclear testing. The unilateral moratoriums on tests that the nuclear-weapon States have adopted are to be commended. However, they are no substitute for a legally binding prohibition against all nuclear tests.

I said just now that I am standing before the Assembly with a sense of urgency. That is because despite the current robustness of the global norm against testing, global trends are conspiring to undermine it. As the Secretary-General said in his message today, we are facing an alarming rise in global mistrust and division. At a time when nearly 13,000 nuclear weapons are stockpiled around the world, and countries are working to improve their accuracy, reach and destructive power, that is a recipe for annihilation.

The rising tide of nuclear risk threatens to engulf the hard-won gains in nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation achieved over the past three decades. That includes the gains made in deterring the testing of nuclear weapons. It is therefore paramount that we convene to acknowledge this critical day, affirming our unwavering stand against nuclear tests. We should use this day to remind ourselves that 29 August pays tribute to the closure of the Semipalatinsk nuclear test site in Kazakhstan, where the harmful legacy of nuclear tests remains ever-present, 32 years after the Cold War’s conclusion. We should use this day to remember Trinity, the first-ever nuclear detonation, which took place in 1945, marking the beginning of an era of more than 2,000 nuclear tests. Those tests took place in some of the world’s most fragile ecosystems, home to some of its most vulnerable people. Those actions have had lasting and devastating effects on our collective environment, health and security. We should remind ourselves today of the testimonies of survivors and victims and the documented evidence, all of which

testify to the enormous suffering and irreversible consequences of such tests.

I want to be very clear. The only way to prevent the reversal of the gains made in the pursuit of an end to nuclear testing is to bring the CTBT into force and to do so without delay. I was encouraged by the near-unanimous support for the CTBT's urgent entry into force shown by States parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons at the recent session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2026 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, as well as their collective recognition of the need to bolster support for the victims of nuclear tests and prioritize environmental remediation. I now echo the Secretary-General's call for all States that have yet to do so to sign and ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. The remaining annex 2 States — whose ratifications are required for the Treaty's entry into force — should not wait for others to act but rather take unilateral action in the name of those who have suffered and are suffering from the catastrophic consequences of nuclear testing. The time for action is now. We must unite with renewed zeal to achieve our shared goal, a world that is free of the spectre of nuclear tests and free of nuclear weapons. There can be no excuses for further delay.

The President: I thank Mrs. Nakamitsu for her statement.

Before proceeding further, and as indicated in my letter dated 10 August 2023, I should like to consult members with a view to inviting the following speakers to deliver keynote addresses at this commemorative meeting: Mr. Robert Floyd, Executive Secretary of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization; Mr. Rafael Mariano Grossi, Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency, represented by Ms. Vivian Okeke, Director of the International Atomic Energy Agency Liaison Office in New York; and Mr. Elias Merad Taouli, youth activist for Reverse the Trend: Save our People, Save our Planet.

If there is no objection, may I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly, without setting a precedent, to invite these speakers to make statements at this commemorative meeting?

It was so decided.

The President: I now invite Mr. Robert Floyd, Executive Secretary of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization, to make a keynote statement.

Mr. Floyd (Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization): I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for inviting me to address the General Assembly on the critical issue of banning nuclear tests. My thanks also go to High Representative Izumi Nakamitsu for delivering her opening remarks on behalf of Secretary-General António Guterres.

Just 23 days ago, I had a humbling experience. I was in Hiroshima for the annual ceremony to remember what happened on 6 August 1945. A nuclear bomb exploded 600 metres above that city in what was certainly the largest near-instantaneous obliteration of humans, by humans. Visiting the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum, we see artefacts that were found afterwards — things we cannot forget. There is a child's tiny, charred tricycle, found a kilometre away from the centre of the blast. On that beautiful, calm summer morning, a little boy, just 3 years old, had been happily riding on that very tricycle — and then no more. We here today cannot imagine what that horrendous bomb explosion was like for the people in and around Hiroshima or for those in Nagasaki only a few days later. But the weapons built and tested in the years after Hiroshima and Nagasaki had far more explosive power. The bigger the test, the bigger the impact on human health and the environment.

Eventually, the nations of the world came together and said that enough was enough. It was clear that ending explosive nuclear tests would be a vital brake on the development of nuclear weapons and on arms proliferation. That in turn would make nuclear disarmament possible. The case for stopping those tests became unanswerable, but unanswerable did not mean quick. In 1963, the Partial Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty was signed, banning nuclear tests in the atmosphere, in outer space and under water. The preamble to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons in 1968 was aimed at achieving the discontinuance of all test explosions of nuclear weapons for all time.

But it took almost 30 more years and many more nuclear-test explosions before the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) was agreed on in 1996. Why did it take so long? Amid all of the politics was a key practical issue — how to verify whether promises to refrain from testing nuclear weapons were actually

being kept. A year after the historic 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the CTBT was at last agreed. The diplomats now had the science to make a test ban verifiable, and what a difference the CTBT has made. Before 1996, there were more than 2,000 nuclear tests, including 450 in Semipalatinsk in Kazakhstan, almost all of them far bigger than the bombs that devastated Hiroshima and Nagasaki. From 24 September 1996 through today, 29 August 2023, there have been fewer than a dozen test events. In the twenty-first century, only one State has tested a weapon.

The science of 1996 was good enough to guarantee that all nuclear explosions could be detected once the global network of monitoring stations had been built. We now have that network, and we also have far better technology — seismic, hydroacoustic, infrasound and radionuclide data streaming in from more than 300 stations all around the planet, all the time. States know that the remarkable international monitoring system of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO) with the International Data Centre will detect any test, anytime and anywhere. We spot anything unexpected or strange really fast and we can say where and when it happened. The CTBTO's verification system is a key global security asset unlike any other. It is credible and respected because it works. Every State has access to all the data and is trained in analysis so that it can detect a nuclear explosion.

Verification works. Transparency works. When lack of trust is an issue, it is vital that we have an independent source of facts. Because the CTBT verification system works and almost all States support the Treaty, we have created a powerful global norm against testing. The CTBT has 186 signatories and 178 ratifications, and there will be another one next week. There have been eight more ratifications in the past 18 months, with Sri Lanka being the latest to ratify just last month. A wonderful celebration followed the ratification by Solomon Islands earlier this year. The momentum towards universality is increasing. Recently, both Somalia and South Sudan committed publicly to signing and ratifying the Treaty. But the Treaty has still not come into force. I am not the first, and I will not be the last, to say that we are facing challenging and worrisome times globally. Today I am therefore making the case for urgency and responsibility. I urge possessor States to please recommit to their moratoriums on testing clearly and publicly. I urge those States that

have not signed the CTBT to please do so. I urge annex 2 States and any other States that have not yet ratified the CTBT to please do so.

I would like to conclude with one more thought. It was on 29 August 1991 that the Semipalatinsk nuclear test site, formerly in the Soviet Union and now in the Republic of Kazakhstan, was finally closed. In 2009, the General Assembly adopted resolution 64/35, proclaiming 29 August the International Day against Nuclear Tests. This year is the fourteenth birthday of the International Day against Nuclear Tests. When I was 14 years old, there had been more than 1,000 nuclear-weapon test explosions. Now, thanks to the CTBT, any child turning 14 this year has lived through just five tests — all by one country. Our world is a far safer and cleaner place without nuclear-weapon tests, but until we have a legally binding ban on nuclear testing, that progress is at risk of unravelling. We must act with responsibility and urgency.

The President: I now give the floor to Ms. Vivian Okeke, Director of the International Atomic Energy Agency Liaison Office in New York.

Ms. Okeke (International Atomic Energy Agency): Let me start by conveying warm greetings to everyone here from Mr. Rafael Mariano Grossi, the Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), who thanks you, Mr. President, for convening this high-level plenary meeting of the General Assembly to mark the 2023 observance of the International Day against Nuclear Tests. We commend the Government of Kazakhstan for its commitment over the years to the promotion of the observance of this International Day, having experienced first-hand the devastating effects of nuclear testing on its territory in Semipalatinsk.

For almost 70 years the IAEA has helped to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons while making nuclear science and technology available for peaceful purposes, especially to developing countries, in areas such as energy, human health, food and agriculture and others, thereby contributing to the achievement of nine of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. Since the Director General took office in December 2019, the IAEA has taken a renewed approach to the peaceful uses of nuclear science and technology. The Director General has launched major initiatives such as Rays of Hope, Zoonotic Disease Integrated Action, Nuclear Technology for Controlling Plastic Pollution, the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellowship Programme and the Lise

Meitner Programme. Those initiatives are ramping up the response to the scourges of cancer and plastic pollution and enhancing pandemic preparedness and women's representation in the nuclear field for the benefit of humankind.

It is essential to ensure that nuclear technology is used safely and securely. While nuclear safety and security are national responsibilities, the IAEA serves as the international forum in which countries work together to develop safety standards and security guidance and share best practices. The IAEA helps its member States to fulfil their nuclear safety responsibilities by developing safety standards that can be used as a basis for national regulations, and by providing a variety of services, including expert review missions, on request. In 2022 alone, the IAEA conducted 62 peer-review and advisory services. In addition, it plays a leading role as a global platform for strengthening nuclear security. Countries have been increasingly seeking our help in minimizing the risk of nuclear and other radioactive material falling into the hands of terrorists. To better assist member States in preparing for security challenges posed by non-State actors, the IAEA is building a new nuclear security training and demonstration centre, part of the IAEA laboratories complex in Seibersdorf, near Vienna. The new centre will increase the IAEA's capacity for providing training and development in support of sustainable nuclear security initiatives and their effective implementation.

Another core function of the IAEA is to verify that countries are not working to acquire nuclear weapons. The Agency's inspectors conduct verification at nuclear facilities all over the world. They bring back samples that are analysed for possible traces of nuclear material. The IAEA independently verifies the correctness and completeness of States' declarations about their nuclear material and activities. The safeguards provide credible assurance that States are fulfilling their international obligations to refrain from developing nuclear weapons. They also make it possible to detect any misuse of nuclear material or technology in a timely manner by alerting the world to potential proliferation. Along with the continuing increase in the past few decades in the number of nuclear facilities and other locations under IAEA safeguards, the Agency has improved its analytical capabilities with new, state-of-the-art safeguards laboratories in Seibersdorf and with its incorporation of the use of emerging technologies, including artificial

intelligence, within well-defined ethical guidelines, to support and optimize nuclear verifications.

Having outlined the IAEA's vital work on nuclear safety, security and safeguards, I would be remiss if I failed to mention our tireless efforts in Ukraine. The IAEA has deployed 53 missions to Ukraine, with a total of 116 Agency staff members, to help stabilize the situation and closely assess the nuclear safety and security situation and related needs. Eight of those missions, including the IAEA Support and Assistance Mission to Zaporizhzhya in September 2022, when the continued presence of Agency staff at the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant was established, were led by Director General Grossi. At the request of Ukrainian officials, the Agency established a continued presence of its staff at all the country's nuclear sites in January. In addition, we have arranged several deliveries of equipment related to nuclear safety and security, and safeguards activities in Ukraine have also continued. The IAEA provides information on the situation in Ukraine through reports and periodic updates.

On the important matter that has brought us here today, let me note that the IAEA continues to assist States in characterizing residual radioactivity in areas affected by nuclear-weapon tests to assess whether the safe use of such land is possible or if remedial actions are needed. The IAEA is currently implementing a project focused on strengthening national capabilities to assess the feasibility of releasing parts of the Semipalatinsk test site to normal economic use. That work will continue in the years to come and serves as a strong reminder of the long-term hazardous effects of nuclear testing.

In conclusion, let me reaffirm the Agency's strong commitment to contributing to a world free of nuclear weapons and nuclear tests. By exercising credible nuclear verifications and by promoting effective nuclear security, the IAEA is making a tangible contribution to that end and working in partnership with the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization.

The President: I now give the floor to Mr. Taouli.

Mr. Taouli: My name is Elias Merad Taouli, and I am a 17-year-old Algerian-American, representing Reverse the Trend: Save Our People, Save Our Planet, the youth initiative of the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation. The Nuclear Age Peace Foundation is a non-governmental organization with consultative status to the Economic and Social Council, recognized by the United Nations

as a peace messenger organization. The Foundation has worked since 1982 to create a just and peaceful world free of nuclear weapons. It is an honour to stand before the Assembly to address a matter of vital significance. The critical role of youth voices in multilateral nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation forums and the participation of young people such as myself in policy discussions can contribute to guiding humankind away from the precipice of nuclear Armageddon, as influential voices, including that of Secretary-General António Guterres, have warned around the world.

As a young Algerian-American, I firmly believe that the international community must acknowledge the legacy of nuclear testing worldwide and enable justice for the victims of these inhumane weapons. More than 315 tests were conducted in the Pacific, specifically in Australia, French Polynesia, Kiribati and the Marshall Islands, equivalent to more than 10,000 Hiroshima bombs. In Kazakhstan alone, more than 450 nuclear tests were conducted. Algeria, too, bore the burden of 17 nuclear tests, and other regions and locations were also affected. To this day, the consequences of the nuclear tests continue to cast a long shadow in all of those communities, with mothers having miscarriages, children born with birth defects and continued adverse physical and mental health effects for all. Just as nuclear testing has scarred the ground on which it took place, so too has it left its mark on those communities — a reminder of a painful past that can never be forgotten. The legacy and ongoing nuclear violence is unfinished business. It calls for recognition and reconciliation, and reparations to be made by nuclear perpetrators are long overdue.

Sharing our narratives is essential to educating the next generation about the grave humanitarian and environmental impacts of nuclear weapons. At Reverse the Trend, I initiated the Gerboise Bleue project, a cinematic endeavour that utilizes poignant interviews with young people who have been affected, non-governmental representatives and experts to delve into the enduring impact of the French Government's 1960s nuclear-testing programme in Algeria. Our aim is to present our impactful short film at high schools to shed light on historical events and their present-day implications. We seek to foster a deeper understanding of the devastation caused by nuclear weapons.

The path to nuclear justice requires us to empower young people and raise awareness on the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), our

best hope for a world free of nuclear weapons. As we forge ahead, our commitment remains fuelled by our determination to amplify the voices of those affected by nuclear weapons. The TPNW, with its humanitarian focus, as expressed in articles 6 and 7 of the Treaty, serves as a beacon of hope liberating humankind from the haunting spectre of nuclear weapons. We call on all States that have not done so to sign and ratify the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. United, we stand poised to achieve monumental strides in our unwavering quest for peace and the well-being of afflicted communities across the globe. Together we can establish a future free from the looming shadow that has been cast by nuclear weapons.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Tunisia, who will speak on behalf of the Group of African States.

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

The African Group expresses its appreciation to you, Mr. President, for convening this meeting and for your support of nuclear disarmament. The Group appreciates the valuable message delivered by the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs on behalf of the Secretary-General and the statement by the Executive Secretary of the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO). The fact that we are meeting here today is an indication of our willingness and determination to see an end to nuclear tests as a necessary measure towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons. To that end, the African Group supports the goals of the CTBTO, which seeks a comprehensive ban on nuclear tests, with all their attendant ramifications, and a total cessation of the vertical and horizontal proliferation of nuclear weapons.

The total elimination of nuclear weapons remains the only absolute guarantee against their use or threat of use. In that context, the Group emphasizes how urgent it is to ensure that our planet, together with outer space, is free of nuclear weapons, as their presence constitutes an existential threat to global peace and security and to the future survival of humankind. The Group supports the principle of complete nuclear disarmament as the most important prerequisite for maintaining international peace and security. It is in that spirit that we recall the historic entry into force of the landmark Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), which

among other things comprehensively prohibits nuclear-weapon tests. The Group affirms its full support for the adoption of the Declaration of the first Meeting of States Parties to the TPNW, which reaffirmed the determination to realize the complete elimination of nuclear weapons.

The Group also reiterates its support for efforts to bring the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) into force and for the Vienna Action Plan, adopted to facilitate the effective and timely implementation of the TPNW and its objectives and goals at its first Meeting of States Parties, held in Vienna from 21 to 23 June 2022. The Group looks forward to the convening in New York of the second Meeting of States Parties, from 27 November to 1 December. In that regard, the Group urges all members of the international community, especially nuclear-weapon States and those under the so-called nuclear umbrella, to seize the opportunity to sign and ratify the Treaty as soon as possible, as well as to pursue the goal of a nuclear-weapon-free world.

The African Group reiterates its deep concern about the nuclear-weapon States' slow progress in achieving the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals, in accordance with their legal obligations and undertakings under article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). The Group therefore insists on the nuclear-weapon States' implementation of all measures and undertakings agreed in the context of the NPT, including commitments to achieving the universality of the NPT and establishing a zone in the Middle East free of all weapons of mass destruction. The Group therefore regrets the failure of the two most recent sessions of the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons to reach a consensus on a final outcome document, despite efforts made by many delegations. We also call on nuclear-weapon States to demonstrate the necessary political will to enable the Review Conference to reach concrete recommendations towards achieving nuclear disarmament and the universality of the Treaty.

The Group underscores the contribution of nuclear-weapon-free zones across the world to the overall objectives of achieving nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, thereby enhancing global and regional peace and security. In that context, the African Group reiterates its commitment to the Treaty of Pelindaba, which reaffirms the status of Africa as a nuclear-weapon-free zone and a shield for African

territory, including by preventing the stationing of nuclear explosive devices on the continent and prohibiting the testing of such weapons in the entire space that constitutes the African continent.

In the same vein, the African Group would like to point to the convening pursuant to decision 73/546 of the first session of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction. It calls on all invited States to continue to work constructively and in good faith in order to negotiate a legally binding treaty that satisfies the implementation of the 1995 NPT Review Conference resolution on the Middle East, which was an integral and essential part of the package of decisions and the basis on which consensus was reached on the indefinite extension of the NPT. We also restate our concern about the failure to implement the Action Plan of the 2010 NPT Review Conference regarding the establishment of the Middle East as a zone free from nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. The Group would like to reiterate the continued validity of those commitments and obligations, pending their full implementation.

The Group would like to emphasize humanitarian considerations in the context of all deliberations on nuclear weapons, particularly its serious concern about the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of the use or detonation of nuclear weapons, whether accidentally or deliberately. The African Group calls on all States, particularly nuclear-weapon States, to take into consideration the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of the use of such weapons for human health, the environment and vital economic resources, among other things, and to take the necessary measures aimed at dismantling and renouncing such weapons.

The Group would like to reiterate the importance of achieving universal adherence to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, taking into consideration the special responsibilities of nuclear-weapon States. The Group believes that the Treaty offers hope for halting the further development and proliferation of nuclear weapons, thereby contributing to the goal of nuclear disarmament. We call on the international community to renew its support for promoting the CTBT's entry into force, and on nuclear-weapon States and those that have yet to accede to the NPT, and which are listed in annex 2 of the Treaty and have not yet signed or ratified the CTBT, to do so without further delay and without conditions. The Group looks forward to the convening

of the Conference on Facilitating Entry into Force of the CTBT during the high-level week of the General Assembly at its seventy-eighth session.

In conclusion, the African Group once again calls on all States to work diligently to facilitate the CTBT's expeditious entry into force, in order to fulfil the goals and objectives of a nuclear-weapon-free world, taking into account the special responsibility of the nuclear-weapon States in that regard.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Western European and other States.

Ms. Brandt (Kingdom of the Netherlands): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Group of Western European and other States.

Nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament have been among the key priorities of the United Nations since the establishment of the Organization in 1945. An important element that lies at the core of those objectives is the ban on all nuclear-weapon-test explosions, something that serves the aims of both nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament. Nevertheless, more than 2,000 nuclear tests have taken place since 1945.

On 2 December 2009, the General Assembly at its sixty-fourth session declared 29 August the International Day against Nuclear Tests by unanimously adopting resolution 64/35, calling for increasing awareness and education about the effects of nuclear-weapon-test explosions or any other nuclear explosions and the need for eliminating them as one of the means of achieving the goal of a nuclear-weapon-free world. Like others, I would like to remind the Assembly that 29 August was chosen to commemorate the closure of the Semipalatinsk nuclear test site in Kazakhstan on that date in 1991. The closure of that site, where more than 450 nuclear tests had taken place, signalled the end of an era of unrestrained nuclear testing. Soon afterwards, countries began negotiations for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), which opened for signature five years later, in 1996.

With signatures by 186 States and ratifications by 178, the CTBT is approaching universality. We welcome the four most recent ratifications, by Sri Lanka and the Solomon Islands this year, and by Sao Tome and Principe and Equatorial Guinea late last year.

We applaud the persistent efforts of Mr. Robert Floyd, Executive Secretary of the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization, to achieve further ratifications. We stress the vital importance and urgency of achieving the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and affirm our resolute determination, 27 years after the Treaty was opened for signature, to make that a reality. States can send a strong signal on the need for the Treaty to enter into force by supporting the General Assembly's annual CTBT resolution in the First Committee this year and the upcoming Conference on Facilitating Entry into Force of the CTBT, known as the Article 14 Conference, which will take place on 22 September, on the margins of the high-level week of the General Assembly. We also welcome the prohibition on nuclear testing in force in all nuclear-weapon-free zones.

The Group of Western European and other States strongly and unequivocally condemns Russia's unprovoked attack on Ukraine, which is a flagrant violation of basic concepts of international law, including Article 2, paragraph 4, of the Charter of the United Nations, the notion of the inviolability of borders and the right of sovereign States to choose their own orientation. Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and its threats of nuclear use and testing are seriously undermining and having a significant negative impact on the nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament architecture. We urge all States to refrain from carrying out nuclear-weapon-test explosions and any other nuclear explosions, to maintain and reaffirm their moratoriums in that regard and to refrain from acts that would defeat the object and purpose of the Treaty.

The Group condemns in the strongest terms the six nuclear tests conducted by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea since 2006 in violation of the relevant Security Council resolutions, and expresses its deep concern about the reported preparations for a seventh such test. Indeed, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is the only country to have conducted nuclear tests this century. We urge it to fully comply with its obligations under the resolutions of the Council, including by abandoning its nuclear weapons and ballistic-missile programme in a complete, verifiable and irreversible manner and refraining from conducting any further nuclear tests. We reaffirm our support for the complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization of the Korean peninsula in a peaceful

manner and encourage all the parties to engage and resume a dialogue.

In conclusion, as we await a final and irreversible cessation of all nuclear-test explosions, we are determined to continue to observe the International Day against Nuclear Tests as a means to mobilize Governments, international, regional and subregional organizations, civil society and individuals in adhering to the common cause of achieving a world free of nuclear tests.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the United States of America, who will speak on behalf of the host country.

Ms. Jenkins (United States of America): Let me begin by thanking you, Mr. President, for organizing today's high-level plenary meeting to commemorate the International Day against Nuclear Tests.

For the past 60 years the world has been free from nuclear-explosive tests occurring in the atmosphere, in outer space or under water. But despite the great impact of the 1963 Partial Test-Ban Treaty and the norm it fostered, the goal of a global, legally binding ban on all nuclear-weapon test explosions by all States parties in all environments remains elusive. The vital step for reaching that goal is the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). As many of those here today know, President Biden has been a long-standing supporter of and advocate for the CTBT, and the United States is firmly committed to its support of the Treaty and the efforts to achieve its entry into force. While recognizing our own efforts, we also call on all States, especially those listed in annex 2 of the Treaty, to ratify the CTBT without waiting for others to do so.

For more than 30 years, the United States has not conducted a nuclear explosive test, and we have no plans to do so. We were the first to sign the CTBT when it opened for signature in September 1996. Since then, the United States has maintained a zero-yield moratorium on nuclear explosive testing and calls on all States possessing nuclear weapons to declare or maintain such a moratorium. While voluntary moratoriums help to maintain the international norm against nuclear explosive testing, we also recognize there are no substitutes for the legally binding ban that an enforced CTBT will provide. Such a ban remains in the interest of all States.

As we saw during the tenth Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) last year, a legally binding ban on nuclear explosive testing remains an international priority. The NPT parties recognized, once again, that a ban on all such testing in all environments is an important and necessary step on the path to a world without nuclear weapons. We are concerned, however, by the disturbing nuclear rhetoric from the Russian Federation over the past year and a half, in particular President Putin's statement in February about Russia's willingness to resume nuclear explosive testing. That statement runs counter to Russia's own commitment to the CTBT.

While much progress has been made towards the universalization and entry into force of the CTBT, there is still work to be done to complete the remaining elements of the Treaty's verification regime, which will serve as a vital deterrent to clandestine nuclear explosive testing. Chief among that work is providing adequate resources for the long-term sustainment of the International Monitoring System. After more than a quarter of a century of provisional operations, the International Monitoring System is in need of recapitalization to ensure it continues to serve as a vital deterrent to the conduct of nuclear explosive tests. To that end, the United States joined with the leaders of the other Group of Seven States in their most recent leaders' statement and committed not only to supporting the CTBT, but also to adequately funding the vital components of its verification regime.

Despite the difficult international security environment in which we find ourselves today, all States must recommit to the goal of a global, legally binding ban on nuclear explosive tests as an important milestone on the road to a world without nuclear weapons.

The President: I have received requests for the floor from a number of other delegations for this commemorative meeting.

I now give the floor to the representative of Australia, who will speak on behalf of the Friends of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

Mr. Larsen (Australia): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Friends of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, namely Australia, Canada, Finland, Germany, Japan and the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

We thank the President of the General Assembly for convening this meeting.

At a time when news of the deteriorating international security situation appears to be a daily constant, it can be hard to see where positive change towards peace and security is possible. But one significant step that the international community can positively work towards is eliminating nuclear weapons testing. The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) is already among the most widely accepted and most effective normative instruments to contain and reduce nuclear threats. But we cannot take for granted the norm against nuclear testing until the Treaty is legally binding. Its entry into force as a universal and verifiable ban on any nuclear explosions will benefit all States and must be achieved without delay. It will also significantly strengthen the full implementation of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and reinforce the international nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime.

With signature by 186 States and ratification by 178 States, the CTBT is approaching universality. We welcome the four most recent ratifications, by Sri Lanka, the Solomon Islands, Sao Tome and Principe and Equatorial Guinea. We applaud the persistent efforts of the Executive Secretary of the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization, Mr. Robert Floyd, to achieve further ratifications. We urge all States that have not yet done so to sign and ratify the Treaty without further delay, particularly the remaining eight States listed in its annex 2.

The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty has been instrumental in creating and promoting the global norm against nuclear testing — a norm which, in the twenty-first century, has been defied only by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. We recall our condemnation of the six nuclear tests conducted by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea since 2006 and strongly urge the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to comply fully with all relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions and to take concrete actions towards the complete, verifiable and irreversible dismantlement of its nuclear weapons-related programmes. We reiterate that any new nuclear test by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea would be irresponsible, unacceptable and in violation of Security Council resolutions.

Pending the entry into force of the Treaty, we call upon all States to declare or maintain their existing national moratoriums on nuclear-weapon test explosions and other nuclear explosions and to refrain from any action that would undermine the Treaty's objective and purpose. We welcome ongoing steps to complete the Treaty's verification regime, consisting of the International Monitoring System, the International Data Centre and on-site inspection capabilities.

The International Monitoring System is at the core of the verification regime and already contributes to regional stability by providing reliable means to ensure compliance with Treaty obligations, including through more than 300 verification facilities worldwide, representing almost 90 per cent of the network foreseen by the Treaty. The system has detected every nuclear explosive test that has taken place in the twenty-first century. It also has valuable scientific and civil applications, including monitoring environmental change and detecting volcanic activity, earthquakes and tsunamis. We reiterate that individual States' financial commitments remain crucial to ensure the continued operation and long-term sustainability of all elements of the verification regime, including the ongoing programme of capacity-building and training for national authorities.

In conclusion, there is no doubt that the CTBT contributes significantly to the international security, non-proliferation and disarmament landscape. More than 25 years since the Treaty opened for signature, its value is unquestionable. But we cannot take it for granted. We urge all States that have not already done so to sign and ratify the Treaty. We encourage State signatories to support continued efforts to strengthen the Treaty and its verification regime and to achieve its entry into force as soon as possible.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Sudan, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Arab States.

Mr. Elbukhari (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): I am pleased to deliver this statement on behalf of the Group of Arab States on the occasion of the International Day Against Nuclear Tests, which represents an important event that confirms the desire and persistent commitment of the international community to ending nuclear tests. Those tests have caused horrors to humankind, severe damage to the environment and public health and a threat to international peace and

security, in particular in times of geopolitical tensions and political escalation.

I would like to express the Arab Group's appreciation for the statements delivered by the President of the General Assembly; Mrs. Nakamitsu, on behalf of the Secretary-General; the Executive Secretary of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO); the Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and other speakers. All those statements emphasized the urgent need to eliminate all threats posed by nuclear weapons, which are, undoubtedly, inconsistent with humanitarian principles and international humanitarian law and threaten international peace and security. In that context, the Arab Group expresses its deep concern about the serious threat faced by humankind owing to the continued presence of nuclear weapons, which must be eliminated in a complete, verifiable and irreversible manner, pursuant to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). That would represent the main guarantee and the most effective safeguard against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons.

The Arab Group deplores the failure of two successive Review Conferences of the Parties to the NPT in adopting an outcome document. The Group calls for supporting the Treaty and the non-proliferation regime at the international level and for serious efforts to reach important and effective outcomes at the upcoming eleventh Review Conference. We also hope to build on the important discussions that took place in the first session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2026 Review Conference, held from 31 July to 11 August in Vienna.

The Arab Group stresses the need to confront the risks resulting from nuclear-weapon States' continued possession of nuclear weapons and their efforts to develop those weapons qualitatively and in accordance with their new military doctrines and related nuclear tests. The risks arising from those tests represent an existential threat that should be seriously and consistently addressed by the international community to achieve a world free of nuclear weapons. The total elimination of nuclear weapons is not only a realistic and feasible goal but also a necessary condition to maintaining international security and stability in a sustainable manner and to advancing sustainable development worldwide.

The Arab Group believes that the continued presence of nuclear weapons, non-implementation of article VI of the NPT and relevant binding obligations adopted during several sessions of the NPT Review Conferences and the non-realization of the Treaty's universality all represent a serious threat to international peace and security. The Group also categorically rejects the argument that the possession of nuclear weapons is necessary for international security; that international circumstances are not conducive to advancing the implementation of nuclear disarmament commitments; and that some previous commitments are no longer relevant or are unsuitable in the current international environment or for creating the conditions for the implementation of previous obligations related to nuclear disarmament.

The Arab Group again calls upon nuclear-weapon States to assume their responsibilities in implementing the agreed goals and commitments and fully eliminate their nuclear arsenals, according to a specific timetable. That is the least those countries can do to compensate the international community for the intimidation and considerable and long-term damage caused by the thousands of nuclear tests they carried out in the past.

At a time when the Arab Group reaffirms the importance of supporting international efforts to promote the universality of multilateral conventions and treaties on nuclear disarmament and the elimination of other weapons of mass destruction, including the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), it calls on all countries to join the CTBT, including annex 2 countries. We also emphasize the special responsibility of the nuclear-weapon States, in accordance with the tenth step of the action plan of the 2010 Review Conference, as well as that of the countries with undeclared nuclear programmes and activities and those that have not yet joined the NPT. The Arab Group also calls for continuing international and regional efforts to facilitate the entry into force of the CTBT 25 years after its signature.

Despite the tensions and instability in the Middle East, Arab countries have proved their good intentions and responsibility by joining the NPT. Arab countries have fully complied with their obligations under the Treaty and have actively participated in negotiations for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. We continue to support the activities of the Preparatory

Commission for the CTBTO in fulfilling the objectives set out in the Commission's mandate.

The Arab Group stresses the need to intensify efforts to address the strategic imbalance in the Middle East, stop all undeclared nuclear activities and prevent the onset of an arms race through implementing commitments agreed upon in the international disarmament and non-proliferation mechanisms and the comprehensive safeguards agreements. The Arab Group calls upon Israel, the only party in the region that has not yet joined the NPT, to join it without preconditions or any further delay and to subject all its nuclear facilities to IAEA comprehensive safeguards.

The Arab Group expresses its grave concern about Israel's nuclear capabilities, which constitute a serious and ongoing threat to the security of neighbouring and other countries. The Arab Group also emphasizes the need to establish a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction, in line with the relevant resolution of the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and action plan agreed at the 2010 Review Conference, as well as Security Council resolutions 487 (1981) and 678 (1990) and subsequent relevant resolutions adopted by the General Assembly and the IAEA.

Mr. Larsen (Australia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

In the same context, the Arab Group reaffirms the importance of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction. We welcome the success of the first three sessions of that Conference. The first was chaired by the sisterly Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan in November 2019, the second by the sisterly State of Kuwait in November 2021 and the third by the sisterly Lebanese Republic in November 2022. Those sessions included important and constructive discussions leading to the adoption of valuable outputs to be built upon.

The Arab Group also urges all Conference participants to participate in good faith in order to negotiate a binding treaty that would further promote peace and security at the regional and international levels. We wish every success for the fourth session, to be held in November. We hope that session will yield results that meet international aspirations towards

establishing a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, who will speak on behalf of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States.

Ms. Andrews (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines): I have the honour to speak at today's high-level meeting on behalf of the 33 member States of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC).

We thank Mrs. Izumi Nakamitsu, High Representative for Disarmament affairs; Mr. Robert Floyd, Executive Secretary of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization; Ms. Vivian Okeke, representative of the Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency, and Elias Merad Taouli, youth activist for Reverse the Trend: Save Our People, Save our Planet, for their comprehensive briefings.

CELAC recalls resolution 64/35, adopted by the General Assembly in December 2009, and resolution 72/51, adopted in December 2017, which declared 29 August as the International Day against Nuclear Tests, which is aimed at increasing awareness and education on the effects of nuclear-weapon-test explosions, or any other nuclear explosions, and the need for their cessation as one of the means to achieve a nuclear-weapon-free world. CELAC reiterates its firm support for the commemoration of the International Day against Nuclear Tests and its commitment to upholding the global norm against nuclear testing. Nuclear explosions of all types and other non-explosive nuclear testing aimed at developing and enhancing weapons capabilities threaten human lives, have disastrous long-term environmental consequences and heighten geopolitical tensions, thereby endangering international peace and security.

We therefore implore States to refrain from nuclear testing and insist that States refrain from performing nuclear tests, other nuclear explosions or any other relevant non-explosive tests anywhere in the world, including subcritical experiments and those carried out using simulations intended to develop and enhance nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. Furthermore, such actions run contrary to the object and purpose of the nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament regime, the obligations and provisions contained in the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the spirit and contents of

the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), while undermining its impact as a disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation measure.

CELAC expresses its gratitude to the 186 States that have signed and the 178 States that have ratified the CTBT, and, in that regard, welcomes the fact that Latin America and the Caribbean is a region in which all States have completed the signing and ratification of the instrument. That reinforces the region's commitment to nuclear disarmament and the international non-proliferation regime. CELAC also welcomes and supports the convening of the thirteenth Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty to facilitate the Treaty's entry into force, to be held in New York on 22 September and co-chaired by Panama, a member of our regional group. CELAC reiterates the importance and urgency of the Treaty's entry into force and urges those States that have not yet signed and ratified the Treaty to do so without delay.

CELAC maintains respect for the sovereignty of all States, and, in our pursuit of non-proliferation policies, we reaffirm that they should not undermine the rights of States to pursue nuclear science and technology for safe, secure and peaceful uses. To that end, CELAC values the adoption of the joint action plan for cooperation on peaceful uses of nuclear science and technology for sustainable development for the period from 2022 to 2023 between CELAC member States and the International Atomic Energy Agency. We commit ourselves to working on existing capacities at the regional level, including through the Regional Cooperation Agreement for the Promotion of Nuclear Science and Technology in Latin America and the Caribbean, in order to provide concrete responses to the challenges posed by their application in the areas of, inter alia, health, agriculture, food safety, the environment and energy.

Nuclear weapons must not be used by any State under any circumstances, and their use or threat of use constitutes a crime against humanity and an abominable violation of international law. States should fully respect and comply with the obligations and provisions contained in the various instruments that constitute the non-proliferation architecture, including the NPT and the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. Furthermore, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty has been and remains a critical component in the quest to achieve complete nuclear disarmament and has

received overwhelming support from the international community. Nuclear weapons can decimate humankind and set us back decades in the achievement of our Sustainable Development Goals. CELAC has therefore taken positive steps to confront that existential threat. That is evidenced by the fact that we are party to the 1967 Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean, which established our region as the first nuclear-weapon-free zone in a densely populated area.

Furthermore, we proclaimed our region as a zone of peace, based on respect for the principles and rules of international law, through our declaration made in Havana in 2014. Furthermore, CELAC reiterates the full validity of the declarations on nuclear disarmament adopted by the Community on 20 August 2013, in Buenos Aires; 29 January 2014, in Havana; 29 January 2015, in Belén, Costa Rica; 27 January 2016 in Quito; and 25 January 2017, in Punta Cana, Dominican Republic. CELAC takes note of the first Meeting of States Parties to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which took place in June 2022 in Vienna, and wishes Mexico every success in its presidency of the second Meeting of States Parties, which will take place from 27 November to 1 December in New York City.

The full implementation of the test ban should remain a top priority on the agenda of the international community, without which we will not achieve our common vision of a safer world that is free of nuclear weapons. CELAC reaffirms its region as a nuclear-weapon-free zone and reiterates its commitment, referred to in the Proclamation of Latin America and the Caribbean as a Zone of Peace, to continue to be driven by nuclear disarmament as a priority objective and contribute to the general development and total disarmament to promote the strengthening of trust among nations.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of the European Union, in its capacity as observer.

Mr. Gonzato (European Union): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU). The candidate countries North Macedonia, Montenegro, Albania, Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as Andorra, Monaco and San Marino, align themselves with this statement.

The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) is one of the key pillars of the international

disarmament and non-proliferation architecture contributing to global peace and security. The Treaty's long-standing legitimacy and vital importance for our collective security is underscored in Security Council resolution 2310 (2016) and the annual General Assembly resolutions relating to the CTBT. The EU will continue to rally support for the CTBT and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization in all relevant multilateral forums. The CTBT's entry into force has always been and will remain a top priority for the European Union. This high-level meeting provides another opportunity to urgently call for the Treaty's prompt entry into force and universalization.

All EU member States have ratified the Treaty and consistently call on all the remaining eight annex 2 States — China, Egypt, Iran, Israel and the United States of America, which still need to ratify the Treaty, and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, India and Pakistan, which still need to sign and ratify it — to do so without any preconditions or further delay in order to bring it into force. Pending the entry into force of the Treaty, the EU calls on all States to abide by the moratorium on nuclear-weapon-test explosions or any other nuclear explosions and to refrain from any action contrary to the object and purpose of the Treaty.

The EU warmly welcomes the recent eight additional ratifications of the Treaty by Tuvalu, the Gambia, Dominica, Timor-Leste, Equatorial Guinea, Sao Tome and Principe, Solomon Islands and Sri Lanka, which constitutes yet another step towards the CTBT's universalization. We commend the Executive Secretary, Mr. Robert Floyd, and his team for that impressive record and fully support their efforts towards achieving additional ratifications of the Treaty. We also encourage further engagement with civil society to promote the CTBT, and in that context, we commend the work of the CTBTO Youth Group.

The current security environment is marked by the Russian invasion of Ukraine, increased tensions and continuing proliferation crises. Russia must immediately cease its war of aggression, unconditionally withdraw all its forces and military equipment from the entire territory of Ukraine and fully respect Ukraine's territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence within its internationally recognized borders. We also express our concern about Russia's announcement of its readiness to conduct a nuclear test, which is inconsistent with its signing and ratification

of the CTBT and risks undermining confidence in the Treaty in these turbulent times.

The EU urges the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to cease its unlawful and destabilizing actions, which undermine regional and international peace and security, and instead engage in dialogue with the relevant parties. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea must comply with its obligations under the relevant resolutions of the Security Council to refrain from nuclear testing and launches using ballistic missile technology. Any nuclear test must be met with a swift, united and robust international response.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea cannot and will never have the status of a nuclear-weapon State in accordance with the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). The Democratic People's Republic of Korea must abandon all its nuclear weapons and existing nuclear programmes, as well as any other weapons of mass destruction and its ballistic missile programmes, in a complete, verifiable and irreversible manner, as required by Security Council resolutions. We urge the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to sign and ratify the CTBT without any preconditions or further delay. We also call on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to return to full compliance with the NPT as a non-nuclear-weapon State and its Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency and to sign and ratify an additional protocol thereto.

It is critical that all Member States, especially members of the Security Council, ensure the full implementation of United Nations sanctions and urge the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to resume meaningful dialogue with all parties. The EU stands ready to support a meaningful diplomatic process. We are committed to working with all relevant partners to build a basis for sustainable peace and security in which the Democratic People's Republic of Korea takes steps aimed at pursuing the complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization of the Korean peninsula.

Following the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's six previous nuclear tests, the CTBTO demonstrated its invaluable role in quickly providing reliable and independent data, enabling the international community to respond appropriately and swiftly. The CTBTO has provided the world with a truly global, high-technology monitoring system for nuclear explosions — something that no single country can do.

The EU reiterates its confidence in the CTBT's verification regime and looks forward to the completion of the International Monitoring System (IMS). We recognize its deterrence effect against non-compliance with the Treaty and the ability to respond to threats to international peace and security that it provides. Ensuring the sustainability and effectiveness of the verification regime through adequate funding remains crucial.

In addition to the CTBT's obvious contribution to international peace and security, the CTBTO's integrated capacity-building assists States in using IMS data for civil and scientific applications and research associated with Treaty-related verification technologies, including tsunami and volcanic ash cloud warning. To make best use of our collective investment, the EU advocates for fully exploiting the potential benefits of civil and scientific applications of IMS data and financially supports capacity-building for developing countries in that regard. Since 2006, the EU has provided the CTBTO with voluntary contributions of more than €29.5 million to fund a variety of technical projects to strengthen the verification regime and build capacity in developing countries, and we will continue to do so.

Finally, we recall that the EU is a supporter of 10 actions on the Secretary-General's Agenda for Disarmament, including on promoting the entry into force of the CTBT. We will continue to use every opportunity to call for the CTBT's prompt entry into force and universalization in all relevant international forums and to actively and persistently advocate for the signing and ratification of the CTBT in meetings with the countries that have not yet signed or ratified the Treaty, notably the remaining annex 2 States. In that regard, we praise the efforts of the outgoing article XIV coordinators, Italy and South Africa, and urge all States signatories to work constructively with the designated incoming coordinators, Norway and Panama, towards early consensus on the draft declaration to be adopted at the upcoming Conference on Facilitating Entry into Force of the CTBT on 22 September. We also welcome the continuous efforts of the group of Friends of the CTBT towards its entry into force and universalization.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Brunei Darussalam, who will speak on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

Ms. Sulaiman (Brunei Darussalam): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

ASEAN remains fully committed to strengthening multilateralism and enhancing international cooperation to ensure and maintain global peace and security, especially amid the challenges the world faces today on multiple fronts. We recognize that heightened tensions between major Powers and the existence and modernization of nuclear weapons pose real and existential threats to humankind. It is therefore absolutely essential to uphold global solidarity in our efforts to ensure the total elimination of nuclear weapons. ASEAN firmly believes that the total elimination of nuclear weapons is the only way guarantee against their use and threat of use. In that regard, we call on all countries, particularly the nuclear-weapon States, to demonstrate good faith, promote mutual understanding, enhance cooperation and ensure responsible and collective action to realize a world without nuclear weapons.

Pending their total elimination, ASEAN reaffirms its collective position against the testing of nuclear weapons, and we call for universal adherence to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). We urge the remaining annex 2 States to sign and ratify the CTBT as soon as possible to facilitate its entry into force. As a testament to ASEAN's strong commitment to the international norm against nuclear testing, all ASEAN member States have ratified the CTBT.

ASEAN also recognizes that the dangers of nuclear testing continue to be of utmost concern. Therefore, the situation in all regions that have undergone nuclear-test-explosions will not be forgotten. We encourage the international community to assist those regions.

ASEAN also reaffirms its recognition of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) as the cornerstone of global nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and the peaceful use of nuclear energy. ASEAN welcomes the recent convening of the first session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2026 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. We hope that this review cycle will produce meaningful outcomes and provide additional momentum towards general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control. Strong political will among NPT States parties is essential in preserving

the credibility and integrity of the Treaty. The full and effective implementation of the NPT across its three pillars remains imperative. We call on the nuclear-weapon States to fulfil their obligations in advancing nuclear disarmament in accordance with article VI of the NPT and the commitments agreed at the NPT Review Conference.

It is also crucial for the nuclear-weapon States to adhere to legally binding negative security assurances and adopt a policy of no first use regarding nuclear weapons, as well as to reduce and eliminate the risk of any unintentional or accidental use of nuclear weapons pending their total and complete elimination. Additionally, we believe that the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) is a historic agreement that contributes towards global nuclear disarmament and complements other existing nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation instruments. In that regard, we note that the second meeting of States parties to the TPNW will be held later this year.

ASEAN reiterates the importance of regional nuclear-weapon-free zones to the existing global nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime. We reiterate our commitment to preserving the South-East Asian region as a zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction, as enshrined in the ASEAN Charter and the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone (SEANWFZ). We stress the importance of the full and effective implementation of the SEANWFZ Treaty. We would like to share that the Executive Committee of the SEANWFZ Commission is continuing to explore the possibility of allowing individual nuclear-weapon States that are willing to sign and ratify the protocol to the SEANWFZ Treaty without reservation and to provide prior formal assurance to that commitment in writing in order to go ahead with the signing. We welcome any nuclear-weapon States that are ready to do so. We remain committed to continuously engaging with all nuclear-weapon States, including those with reservations, and to intensify efforts by all parties to resolve all outstanding issues in accordance with the objective and principle of the SEANWFZ Treaty.

We reaffirm that the establishment and preservation of SEANWFZ enhances global and regional peace and security, strengthens the global nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime and furthers the goal of a world without nuclear weapons. Furthermore, ASEAN seeks to promote efforts that strengthen the security of SEANWFZ and encourages efforts to reduce nuclear

risk and to diminish and eliminate the role of nuclear weapons in all military and security concepts, doctrines and policies.

It is worrisome to see the recent surge in intercontinental ballistic missile testing and ballistic missile launches by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the increased tensions on the Korean peninsula, which threaten peace and stability in the region. Last month, on 13 July, ASEAN Foreign Ministers issued a statement on the ballistic missile launch on the Korean peninsula, expressing ASEAN's deep dismay at the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's actions. We urge the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to take action to de-escalate tensions, and we call for peaceful dialogue among the parties concerned, including to create a conducive environment towards the realization of lasting peace and stability on a denuclearized Korean peninsula.

We re-emphasize the importance of full compliance with all relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions and abiding by international law. ASEAN reiterates our readiness to play a constructive role, including through the utilization of ASEAN-led platforms such as the ASEAN Regional Forum, in promoting a conducive atmosphere for peaceful dialogue among the parties concerned.

Overall, ASEAN reaffirms our commitment to enhancing cooperation with the international community to advance our shared goal of promoting international peace and security. We believe that the United Nations is a critical platform for fostering trust and confidence among Member States and facilitating cooperation to pursue nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. With active participation from relevant stakeholders, including women and youth, the international community must work tirelessly towards the dawn of a world free of nuclear weapons.

Mr. Rakhmetullin (Kazakhstan): On behalf of the Government and people of Kazakhstan, I express our gratitude to the President of the General Assembly, Mr. Csaba Kőrösi, for his support in convening the thirteenth observance of the International Day against Nuclear Tests and for his determined vision in our joint efforts towards attaining a world free from weapons of mass destruction.

As we meet today, let me recall that, from the time when the first atomic bomb was detonated, 70 years ago in 1945, at least eight nations have carried out a total

of 2,050 nuclear tests — approximately one quarter of them were in the atmosphere, causing severe long-term harm and suffering to humankind and the entire planet. Just imagine the total destructive power of those more than 520 atmospheric tests, which is equal to 29,000 bombs with the explosive yield of the Hiroshima bomb.

We are deeply grateful to the President of the General Assembly, the Secretary-General, the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs, the International Atomic Energy Agency, the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization and civil society advocacy groups for their steadfast advocacy for global zero.

Nuclear weapons are an all-pervading issue. They are a direct and existential threat to the planet. The health effects of radiation from nuclear bombs persist in survivors, including emergency and recovery workers, passing from generation to generation. Furthermore, with increasing geopolitical tensions and the threat of use of nuclear weapons, we are seeing a trend towards nuclear-sharing, which can lead to further proliferation and weapons accumulation.

We are extremely anxious about the rise of disturbing belligerent rhetoric and signs of the potential revival of a bloc mentality, accompanied by the emergence of new alliances or affinity groups. The struggle for power, or however we refer to it, is resulting in the rapid modernization and increased production of even more potent and advanced nuclear weapons. That causes the command-and-control systems of nuclear-weapon States, including those of de facto nuclear States, to become more vulnerable to cyberattacks. Nuclear weapons become more complex with advances in science and nuclear technologies, as manifested in missile defence systems and hypersonic delivery systems with global strike capabilities and threats, thereby creating unprecedented consequences. The emergence of artificial intelligence, with its foreboding threats, further adds to the uncertainty.

There are various steps we should take urgently. The main imperative is the restoration of trust. Trust is the backbone of peace. On the basis of trust, all States must ratify and comply with the key legally binding instruments related to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. Besides those, political wisdom, leadership and mutual trust must assume greater precedence going forward, with confidence-building measures through dialogue, negotiations and joint

activities. We need to expand the number of nuclear-weapon-free zones and ensure greater cooperation among them. We have to increase general public knowledge about the threat of nuclear-weapon testing, which could then be mobilized into demanding that Governments take action.

It is also critical to focus on education and greater awareness through joint undertakings involving policymakers and decision-makers, the public and private sectors, science and education, the media and civil society. We need innovative initiatives to engage women and youth in all segments of society in the collective efforts to achieve nuclear abolition.

We should combine our efforts with other initiatives, such as the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons, supported by the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, observed on 26 September, and the Kyrgyz Republic's proposal to institute the International Day for Disarmament and Non-Proliferation Awareness, observed on 5 March.

Kazakhstan pledges to strive relentlessly to bring everyone together, because we believe that that reality is not out of reach. We invite all to join the ongoing multilateral action for a world free of nuclear weapons, undertaken by the overwhelming majority of Member States and other stakeholders.

Finally, it gives me immense pleasure to invite members to a commemorative luncheon reception, immediately following this meeting, to be hosted at the Kazakhstan Permanent Mission from 1:15 p.m. to 2.30 p.m.

Ms. Chan Valverde (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): Costa Rica wishes to recognize the leadership of the Republic of Kazakhstan in defending the cause of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. Without its leadership, the International Day against Nuclear Tests would not have been possible today.

In that regard, allow me to make three points.

First, the International Day against Nuclear Tests is an opportunity to reiterate our unequivocal commitment to the international norm against nuclear tests. Nuclear tests are not just a bad practice as it pertains to non-proliferation, but also a serious challenge to the disarmament and non-proliferation regime. Such tests are specifically banned in article 1 of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). Costa Rica calls on all States to refrain from conducting or

threatening to conduct any activities that are contrary to the obligations and provisions of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT).

Secondly, voluntary moratoriums are not a substitute for legally binding bans, as set out in the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. Consequently, the adoption of new concrete steps to bring the Treaty into force remains a key priority, with particular emphasis on ratification by the eight outstanding annex 2 States. We welcome the recent Treaty ratifications and signatures, which bring the total to 186 signatories and 178 ratifying States. But that is not enough.

Costa Rica calls on all States that have not yet done so to sign and ratify all international treaties that move us closer to a world free of nuclear tests and nuclear weapons, including the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the CTBT and the TPNW.

Thirdly, we must also take into account estimates by the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons that the nine nuclear-weapon States spent \$82.9 billion in 2022 on maintaining and modernizing their nuclear weapons. In a world of finite resources, such expenditures are immoral and unacceptable.

Costa Rica calls on States to comply with the mandate contained in Article 26 of the Charter of the United Nations to establish a security system with the least diversion possible of the world's human and economic resources towards armaments. Article 26 should be our mantra as we seek the resources necessary to fulfil our commitment to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Nuclear tests are a dangerous and deadly vestige of an era we would do well not to repeat. We can and must decide together to consign such tests to the history books.

Mr. Guerra (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, allow me to thank the President of the General Assembly for convening today's high-level meeting to commemorate and promote the International Day against Nuclear Tests. Today's commemorative event, which brings us together on the anniversary of the closure of the Semipalatinsk nuclear test site, is a major opportunity to reflect on the devastating effects of nuclear tests and on the importance of achieving their complete and unconditional elimination.

More than 20 years have passed since the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), a cornerstone of the international non-proliferation system, was opened for signature, but the ratifications necessary for its entry into force have not been achieved.

Argentina reiterates its deep concern about the existence, modernization, increase in, and use and threat of use of nuclear weapons, as well as their humanitarian and environmental consequences. Nuclear weapons should not be used under any circumstances. The use and threat of use of nuclear weapons constitute a crime against humanity and a violation of international law, including international humanitarian law and the Charter of the United Nations.

In that regard, we express our firm condemnation of nuclear tests of any kind in any part of the world and urge all States to refrain from conducting nuclear tests, other nuclear explosions or any related non-explosive tests, including subcritical experiments and those carried out through simulations aimed at developing and improving nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. Such actions are contrary to the objects and purposes of the disarmament and non-proliferation system, the obligations and provisions contained in the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the letter and spirit of the CTBT, thereby undermining the impact of those measures for disarmament and non-proliferation.

Argentina welcomes the fact that the CTBT has been signed by 186 States and ratified by 178. In that regard, we welcome ratifications by Equatorial Guinea, Sao Tome and Principe, Solomon Islands and Sri Lanka since the most recent General Assembly meeting devoted to the subject (see A/76/PV.100) and view them as a positive step towards universalization of the Treaty. Nevertheless, we reiterate the vital importance and urgency of the entry into force of the CTBT and urge all annex 2 States that have not yet signed or ratified the Treaty to take the necessary steps to do so without further delay.

Undoubtedly, we must redouble our efforts to find and allocate resources that would lead us to that goal, in particular in the current global context, in which long-standing regional conflicts and other new and equally complex conflicts are giving rise to increasing international insecurity. The CTBT is a crucial tool for reducing the production and modernization of existing nuclear weapons, as well as the development of new

prototypes. However, as long as it does not come into force, there will be no legally binding instrument banning all tests. Increasing tensions among nuclear Powers make the Treaty's entry into force crucial.

Argentina is deeply committed to strengthening and optimizing the effectiveness of the international monitoring system and the CTBT International Data Centre. In that regard, our territory hosts eight monitoring stations and a radionuclide laboratory.

With the recent certification of the station in the Salta province this year, our country has fulfilled all its commitments under the Treaty and encourages other countries to do the same. Today, thanks to the CTBT International Monitoring System, the likelihood of any country conducting secret tests behind the international community's back is very low. For that reason, the tremendous political, legal and economic efforts must culminate in the Treaty's entry into force.

As it has historically done, the Argentine Republic will continue to advocate for the CTBT's speedy entry into force, while calling on States that have not yet ratified it to reconsider their position so as to contribute to the building of a safer world.

Mr. De la Fuente Ramírez (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mexico is grateful for the convening of this meeting and recognizes Kazakhstan for its leadership in promoting the commemoration of the International Day against Nuclear Tests, as a constant reminder of the urgent need to eliminate not only tests, but also all nuclear weapons.

I begin by recalling the more than 2,000 nuclear explosive tests that eight nuclear-weapon States Members of the United Nations have carried out since 1945. We also cannot forget the testimonies of the victims of nuclear tests around the world or ignore the voices that we heard this morning. We must never lose sight of the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons. Although no nuclear tests have been recorded since 2017, they must be banned and eliminated immediately and definitively, as that is the only way to halt their horizontal and vertical proliferation. The unilateral moratorium on nuclear testing by some actors will never be able to replace a legally binding norm, achieved through multilateral negotiations, to ban testing and verify compliance.

The evolving nature of the international security situation cannot serve as an excuse to question the

value of the international nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation architecture. On the contrary, those challenges must be viewed as an urgent call for realizing the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). We call once again on the eight States whose signature or ratification is required for the Treaty's entry into force to adhere to the Treaty as soon as possible without conditions. We welcome the most recent ratification by Sri Lanka in July and by other States in previous months. When the First Committee next meets, in October, Mexico, together with the Australia and New Zealand, will spearhead the submission of the annual draft resolution on the CTBT. We hope that that timely action, within the framework of the General Assembly and other efforts — such as the Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the CTBT, to be held during the high-level week — will contribute to the Treaty's promotion and, above all, its speedy entry into force. We have no other choice. The international community must move forward in building a safer world based on international law and cooperation and not on the unacceptable threat of the use of force, much less the threat of use of weapons of mass destruction.

As it firmly believes in the essential complementarity of the instruments that make up the international non-proliferation and disarmament regime, my country calls on all States that have not yet done so to sign and ratify the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. The second meeting of States parties to that Treaty will take place here, in New York, at the end of November, and we will have the honour of presiding over it.

The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons add to and complement the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean — the celebrated Treaty of Tlatelolco — in paving the way towards a nuclear-weapon-free world. Mexico is and will continue to be firmly committed to this issue.

Mr. Ren Hongyan (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The complete prohibition and comprehensive destruction of nuclear weapons and the ultimate establishment of a world free of nuclear weapons are the shared aspirations of all countries, including China. The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), which was concluded after years of negotiations, is the most important outcome of the nuclear arms control process of the

1990s and, since then, has become an important pillar of the international nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime. It has made a historic contribution to curbing the nuclear arms race, reducing the risk of nuclear war and maintaining international peace security. In the face of the threat posed by nuclear weapons, all of humankind will rise or fall together. Our commemoration of the International Day against Nuclear Tests today reaffirms our shared goal to build a world with lasting peace and universal security.

At the same time, however, we must note that the current international security environment is undergoing the most dramatic changes it has seen since the cold war. The international arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation regime is facing daunting and unprecedented challenges. The risk of a nuclear arms race and conflict is ever-mounting. Against that backdrop, we must remain committed to achieving our shared aspiration, continue to steadfastly practice genuine multilateralism, safeguard the international multilateral disarmament machinery, including the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, advocate for the concept of common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security, categorically reject the cold war mentality, prevent bloc confrontation, prioritize the well-being of humankind and make further efforts to ensure security for all.

China was one of the first signatories of the CTBT and has conducted the fewest nuclear tests among the nuclear-weapon States. As a staunch supporter of the objective and purpose of the Treaty, China has strictly adhered to its commitment to a moratorium on nuclear testing, constructively participated in work of the Preparatory Commission of the CTBT Organization and supported the establishment of the Treaty's monitoring and verification regime. Since the very first day it became a nuclear-weapon State, China has stood for the complete prohibition and comprehensive destruction of nuclear weapons. China consistently upholds the policy of no first use of nuclear weapons and always maintains its nuclear force at the minimum level required for national security. China does not seek nuclear parity or engage in a nuclear arms race with any other nuclear-weapon State. China does not provide a nuclear umbrella or deploy nuclear weapons to other States. China is the only nuclear-weapon State that has made such commitments.

In January 2022, the leaders of the five nuclear-weapon States issued a joint statement on preventing

nuclear war, stressing that a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought and reaffirming that none of their nuclear weapons are targeted at each other or any other State. In the current situation, the statement is undeniably all the more significant. On that basis, China supports continued dialogue and cooperation among the permanent five members of the Security Council in order to discuss feasible nuclear risk-reduction measures. Recently, in his New Agenda for Peace, Secretary-General Guterres proposed that States possessing nuclear weapons must commit to never using them. As a very feasible first step, China calls on all nuclear-weapon-States to issue a joint statement on mutual no first use of nuclear weapons and negotiate and conclude a treaty on the mutual no first use of nuclear weapons in order to pave the way for the future implementation of the Secretary-General's recommendations.

The CTBT and the NPT are both important pillars of the international nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime. The first session of the Preparatory Committee for the eleventh Review Conference of the Parties to the NPT has just concluded. We hope that States parties will build on that momentum, continue to pool their insights and seek consensus, continuously enhance the universality, authority and effectiveness of the NPT and promote the early entry into force of the CTBT. China stands ready to work with all parties to make new contributions to the realization of the collective goal of building a world free of nuclear weapons and the promotion of world peace and security.

Mr. Lagdameo (Philippines): The Philippines aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Brunei Darussalam on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

On this International Day against Nuclear Testing, we stand with the global community, reaffirming our unwavering commitment to banning nuclear tests. During the negotiations of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), the Philippines championed the inclusion of nuclear testing as a prohibited act. Article I of the Treaty binds States parties to abstain from nuclear weapon tests.

Amid heightened tensions among major Powers and nuclear weapon modernization, the existential threat posed to humankind by nuclear weapons is undeniable. We stress that the complete eradication of nuclear

weapons is the only safeguard against their use and threat of use. Regrettably, some nations, despite their legal obligations, continue their nuclear deterrence policies while also conducting intercontinental ballistic missile testing, the outcomes of which could lead to future aggression against another State.

We recall article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), calling for good-faith negotiations on disarmament and a cessation of the arms race. Consistent with article VI, nuclear testing clearly contradicts our NPT obligations. The proper allocation of scarce government resources is crucial. We advocate for channelling limited resources away from nuclear weapon expansion and investing them instead in social protection, the economy, climate resilience and the environment.

It is important to highlight the many detrimental consequences of nuclear testing, which include: first, radiation exposure and health risks, causing genetic mutations and health issues; secondly, radioactive fallout, which contaminates ecosystems and the food chain; thirdly, global political tensions, escalating arms races and the endangerment of global stability; fourthly, environmental damage, which disrupts ecosystems, fracturing land and leading to other humanitarian consequences that affect the communities near the testing sites. In that regard, we express our grave concern about the environmental and humanitarian impacts of nuclear testing, including multigenerational suffering. We also firmly support efforts to assist victims of nuclear testing.

We subscribe to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) in its aim to prohibit all nuclear tests. We urge universal adherence to the CTBT and call on the annex 2 States to sign and ratify it as soon as possible to facilitate its entry into force.

As a signatory to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, we also urge all States, especially those that are parties to the NPT, to ratify the TPNW, whose aim is to complement and reinforce our goals in the NPT.

Regarding the Korean peninsula, we express concern about the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's missile tests and emphasize the importance of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's compliance with the International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards and the NPT. We advocate for continued peaceful dialogue among the parties concerned that

is informed and guided by adherence to the relevant resolutions of the Security Council.

The Philippines remains steadfast in its advocacy for a nuclear-free world. We join forces with the international community in our stand against nuclear testing as we appeal for global cooperation to foster a safer and more peaceful future.

Ms. Rodríguez Mancía (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, I would like to thank the President of the General Assembly for convening this plenary meeting to commemorate the International Day against Nuclear Tests, and the Republic of Kazakhstan for its continued efforts to address this issue. I also thank Under-Secretary-General Nakamitsu, Executive Secretary Floyd, the representative of the International Atomic Energy Agency and the youth activist, Mr. Elias Merad Taouli, for their contributions this morning.

Since 1945, approximately 2,000 nuclear tests have been conducted, with devastating consequences for people and our planet. This has been reflected in human health, the soil, the oceans, animals and even the degradation of the atmosphere. Their effects reverberate from generation to generation. Guatemala therefore reaffirms its commitment to disarmament in all its aspects. My country is a State party to most of the international treaties on that subject and attaches special interest to their effective application.

My delegation is proud to belong to the first densely populated area in the world to be declared a nuclear-weapon-free zone, by virtue of the Treaty of Tlatelolco, which recently celebrated the fifty-sixth anniversary of its adoption. The establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Latin American and Caribbean region has not only contributed to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, but also to regional and global peace and security.

We recognize that the only guarantee against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons is their total elimination. The use or threat of use of nuclear weapons constitutes a crime against humanity and a violation of international law, including international humanitarian law and the Charter of the United Nations itself.

In that connection, my country believes that prohibition facilitates elimination. Banning nuclear weapons is an important first step towards their elimination. To that end, my delegation reiterates its satisfaction with the entry into force of the Treaty

on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which constitutes a milestone and a fundamental step towards nuclear disarmament.

To date, 178 States have signed and ratified the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, and we urge all annex 2 States, whose ratification is indispensable for its entry into force, to accelerate the process of signing and ratifying that instrument without further delay.

We urge States Members of this Organization to refrain from nuclear tests, other nuclear explosions or any other relevant form of non-explosive test. Such actions run counter to the objective and purpose of the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime and to the obligations and provisions contained in the Treaty.

In the current complex context of international peace and security, it is more urgent than ever to pursue the goal of nuclear disarmament. The danger that such weapons pose to the survival of the human race is cause for concern. Today we honour the memory of all victims of nuclear testing and pay our respects to those whose lives have been adversely affected. We owe it to them, and to the generations yet to be born, to not repeat the horrors of nuclear tests and nuclear weapon explosions. That is our collective responsibility.

Mr. Ishikane (Japan): I thank the President of the General Assembly for convening this high-level plenary meeting today. We commend the unwavering efforts of Kazakhstan in bringing this very important subject to the attention of the international community.

Japan aligns itself with the statement delivered by Australia on behalf of the Friends of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT).

The global nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime faces significant challenges. Increasing divisions within the international community, Russia's threat to use nuclear weapons and North Korea's continued nuclear programme underscore the pressing need for the international community to intensify its efforts in revitalizing momentum for nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

We firmly uphold the view that no nation should carry out any nuclear test explosion. We condemn any attempts to do so. Eliminating nuclear testing once and for all will bring us closer to our goal of achieving a world without nuclear weapons.

Bringing the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty into force remains our urgent priority. A legally binding, universal and verifiable ban on any nuclear explosions will inhibit the proliferation, development and qualitative improvement of nuclear weapons. Japan welcomes the recent ratification of the Treaty by Equatorial Guinea, Sao Tome and Principe, Solomon Islands and Sri Lanka. We also applaud the tireless efforts of the Executive Secretary of the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO), Mr. Robert Floyd, to pursue further ratifications.

However, we cannot take the norm against nuclear testing for granted until it is legally binding. Japan urges all States, particularly the remaining States listed in annex 2, to sign and ratify the Treaty. Pending its entry into force, Japan urges all relevant States to declare or maintain existing moratoriums on nuclear weapon test explosions or any other test explosions.

Japan underscores the essential role of the CTBTO Preparatory Commission in detecting and reporting suspected nuclear explosions worldwide. More than 20 years of consistent development of a reliable International Monitoring System have served as an effective deterrence against nuclear testing.

We can attain further substantial progress through resolute political determination. That is the reason Prime Minister Kishida Fumio hosted a high-level meeting of the Friends of the CTBT last September, advocating for stronger political commitment to bolster the Treaty and its verification regime and to expedite its entry into force.

We recall our condemnation of the six nuclear tests conducted by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea since 2006. We strongly urge the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to fully comply with all relevant Security Council resolutions and to take concrete actions towards the complete, verifiable and irreversible dismantlement of its nuclear weapons-related programmes. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea should sign and ratify the CTBT as a matter of priority.

The thirteenth Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the CTBT, scheduled for September, will offer another significant opportunity to take additional concrete measures to advance the universalization of the Treaty. Japan, in cooperation with all those who aspire to realize a world without nuclear weapons, will

contribute constructively to the fruitful discussions at the conference.

Mr. Dvornyk (Ukraine): Ukraine aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of the European Union and would like to make additional remarks in its national capacity.

On the occasion of the International Day against Nuclear Tests, we honour the memory of all victims of nuclear tests and pay tribute to those whose lives were adversely affected. Ukraine takes this opportunity to raise public awareness about the threat and devastating consequences of nuclear weapon tests. From 1945 to date, more than 2,000 nuclear tests have been carried out around the world, affecting people, the environment and social and economic development. Today we are at a critical juncture, at which the world is facing unprecedented challenges to international peace and security and at which the integrity and foundation of all the existing international arms control and non-proliferation regimes are under threat.

Russia's unprovoked, unjustified and full-scale war of aggression against Ukraine has significantly increased nuclear risks. Irresponsible nuclear rhetoric has been part of the aggressor's toolbox from the beginning of its invasion. For the first time in history, operational civilian nuclear facilities were transformed into military targets. Russia's seizure of Ukrainian nuclear facilities and repeated shelling and militarization of the illegally occupied Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant represent a critical threat to nuclear safety and security and increase the risk of a major nuclear disaster with potential devastating consequences for Ukraine and far beyond. In addition, the announcement of the deployment of Russian non-strategic nuclear weapons on the territory of Belarus and Russia's suspension of its participation in the New START Treaty clearly demonstrate Russia's attempts to escalate the situation even further.

Despite Russia's incendiary rhetoric and destructive actions, it is crucial that all responsible United Nations Member States do not fall for Moscow's nuclear blackmail and consolidate their actions to ensure reliable deterrence and prevent further erosion of the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation architecture by Russia.

As we mark the International Day against Nuclear Tests, we stress the utmost importance of the entry into force and universalization of the Comprehensive

Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). Let me emphasize that the voluntary moratorium on explosive nuclear testing declared by a number of States is an important step, but it is insufficient, as it will never replace the legally binding nature of the Treaty. In that regard, we call on all States that have yet to sign or ratify the CTBT to do so without delay, notably the annex 2 States, whose ratification and signature are necessary for the Treaty's entry into force. At the same time, we welcome the recent ratifications of the CTBT by Dominica, Equatorial Guinea, the Gambia, Sao Tome and Principe, the Solomon Islands, Sri Lanka, Timor-Leste and Tuvalu.

As of today, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea remains the only country in the twenty-first century that has conducted nuclear tests. Ukraine strongly condemns the series of ballistic and intercontinental ballistic missile launches conducted by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea throughout 2022 and 2023, in blatant violation of relevant Security Council resolutions.

In that regard, we call on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to refrain from conducting any ballistic missile tests, fully implement and respect all Security Council resolutions related to its weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missile programmes, immediately return to compliance with the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the International Atomic Energy Agency comprehensive safeguards agreements, including by signing and ratifying the additional protocol thereto, as well as the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty itself.

In conclusion, we would like to reiterate our strong commitment to bringing an end to nuclear tests at any time and in any place in the world.

Mr. Massari (Italy): Italy aligns itself with the statements delivered on behalf of the European Union and the Group of Western European and other States and would like to add some remarks in its national capacity.

Today's high-level meeting provides a fresh opportunity each year to raise awareness about the devastating effects of the use of nuclear weapons and testing on the environment and human life. It also allows us to further emphasize the need to cease nuclear testing and reaffirm our commitment to the ultimate goal of a peaceful and secure world, free of nuclear weapons.

The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) is a cornerstone of the disarmament and non-proliferation agenda, as well as of the wider multilateral architecture. By banning any nuclear weapon test explosion or any other nuclear explosion, it counteracts the development and qualitative improvement of nuclear weapons and helps to prevent nuclear competition.

Regrettably, more than 25 years after its opening for signature, the CTBT has not yet entered into force. It has, however, achieved two very important goals. It has paved the way for a moratorium on nuclear tests, which we call on all States to maintain, and through its related organization, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO), it has created a highly effective global verification regime, the invaluable role of which in quickly providing reliable and independent data has been repeatedly demonstrated. Nevertheless, progress on the way to disarmament and non-proliferation requires that the current voluntary moratoriums on nuclear test explosions be translated into a binding norm, through the entry into force of the CTBT.

We therefore strongly support any initiative aimed at facilitating its entry into force. To that end, Italy has been co-President of the ministerial Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the CTBT (article XIV conference) since September 2021, together with South Africa. In that two-year period, we have strengthened our efforts, in partnership with South Africa, the Provisional Technical Secretariat of the CTBTO and States signatories, to advance the universalization of the Treaty with new signatures and more ratifications. Of course, we fully support the excellent outreach work that Executive Secretary Robert Floyd and his team undertake so actively and successfully.

In that regard, I warmly welcome the ratifications of the Treaty, over the past two years, by Dominica, Equatorial Guinea, the Gambia, Sao Tome and Principe, the Solomon Islands, Sri Lanka, Timor-Leste and Tuvalu. Let me therefore once again reiterate the plea to all States that have not yet done so, in particular, the remaining eight annex 2 States, to sign and ratify the Treaty without further delay. We welcome the designation of Panama and Norway as co-Presidents-designate of the Article XIV process and look forward to the upcoming article XIV conference, to be held in New York, as the next significant step in our collective effort towards achieving the CTBT's entry into force.

The current threats to global peace and security make it more urgent than ever to renew all efforts for the universalization and entry into force of the CTBT. Therefore, we strongly condemn Russia's unjustified and unprovoked aggression against Ukraine, which is a blatant violation of international law and humanitarian principles.

In that spirit, we urge the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to refrain from further provocations and to take concrete steps towards complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization. We therefore call on Pyongyang to engage in credible negotiations in that respect, comply with relevant Security Council resolutions, return to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and sign and ratify the CTBT.

At the same time, we call on the international community to continue to support the completion of the CTBT verification regime even before the entry into force of the Treaty, so as to further improve its monitoring capacity and ability to provide accurate data analysis. We remain fully committed to the strengthening of the International Monitoring System, including through our national seismic station and radionuclide laboratory.

I would like to conclude by emphasizing the paramount importance of a common effort to achieve the entry into force of the CTBT. Every single country has a role to play. Italy calls on all partners to work closely together to create political momentum and turn it into action and, ultimately, into reality.

Mr. Tito (Kiribati): We are gathered here in the General Assembly today to commemorate the International Day against Nuclear Tests — an initiative started by our good friend, the Republic of Kazakhstan.

Since 1945, more than 2,000 nuclear tests have caused severe humanitarian and environmental harm to innocent individuals and their communities, without their consent. The great Powers selected places far off from their centres, where they would be able to conduct their tests smoothly, without too much hassle or disturbance.

In my country, Kiribati, the citizens of Kiritimati island experienced the tragic legacy of 33 nuclear tests carried out by our friends Britain and the United States in the 1950s and the 1960s. The 500 citizens of Kiribati living on Kiritimati island at the time of the tests received little protection and inadequate warning. They were not

provided with proper individualized protective gear but advised to take shelter in open spaces with tarpaulin cover spread over them and warned to cover their eyes with their hands. Not being aware of the dangers of such tests, most of them lifted the tarpaulin cover provided for them to catch a glimpse of the spectacular display of the intensely hot cloud of fire above them. Many of those people complained sometime later about all sorts of untreatable illnesses and health complications, most of which resulted in death. There were numerous cases of cancer, congenital disabilities and abnormalities with newborn babies. According to various reports, similar complaints were made by the veterans and other foreigners who were on the island when the tests were carried out.

To this day, the citizens of Kiritimati continue to suffer from not only physical medical problems caused by radiation exposure, but also traumatic and intergenerational harm from those weapons of mass destruction. Given the lack of proper data collection and scientific research analysis of nuclear-related diseases on the island, it is anticipated that the Scientific Advisory Group and the voluntary trust fund currently being established under the framework of the Vienna Action Plan would help to address that institutional deficiency, as well as the medical needs of nuclear-related patients and environmental remediation actions.

On behalf of our affected people, we call on the nuclear-weapon States concerned to provide targeted support for those affected people and for the radiological clean-up of the island.

In 2021, the historic Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) entered into force. We are pleased to be a strong supporter of the Treaty, including its humanitarian provisions on victim assistance, environmental remediation, international cooperation and assistance. We are also pleased to be spearheading the intersessional working group on those humanitarian provisions with Kazakhstan. We encourage all States that have not yet done so to sign and ratify the TPNW.

Kiribati recognizes that the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons complements both the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the Comprehensive-Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty through its article I prohibitions, as well as the humanitarian provisions contained in both articles VI and VII. The TPNW provides a means for affected States to seek international nuclear justice.

We also strongly believe that the States parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), especially the nuclear-weapon States, should commit to providing the necessary support and assistance to the people harmed as a result of those States' use and testing of nuclear weapons. It is the logical next step in fulfilling article VI obligations.

At the 2023 Preparatory Committee for the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, my delegation invited the other States parties to support references to victim assistance, environmental remediation, international cooperation and assistance. We also firmly advocated the need for the international community to visit former test sites and engage with affected communities in order to fully grasp the humanitarian and environmental impact of those weapons. International visits to the test sites provide an educational experience to young people from around the world.

We will continue to uplift the voices, especially those of young people from the affected communities, and encourage Pacific youth to express themselves about nuclear weapons. Often, they express their views through the arts. In that regard, we were pleased to co-sponsor an art exhibit, featuring paintings from Pacific youth, with the Republics of the Marshall Islands and of Kazakhstan, as well as the Marshallese Educational Initiative, the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation and its youth initiative Reverse the Trend, at the 2023 NPT Preparatory Committee in Vienna. We are hopeful that through that collaboration with youth representatives and youth-led organizations, we will shift the needle and steer the international community towards supporting a peaceful and sustainable world free of nuclear weapons.

As we commemorate the International Day Against Nuclear Tests, Kiribati commits to presenting the stories of the survivors in all United Nations forums, including the upcoming General Assembly's First Committee, second Meeting of States Parties to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and the 2024 Preparatory Committee for the 2026 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

Mr. Pretterhofer (Austria): I thank the presidency for giving me the floor and for convening today's important commemorative plenary meeting.

Austria fully aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union and the statement delivered by the representative of the Netherlands on behalf of the Group of Western European and other States.

Seventy-eight years have passed since the first nuclear-weapons test in the desert of New Mexico, a fact that recently has been brought back to the public's attention due to the success of the movie *Oppenheimer*. New studies show that the consequences of the radioactive radiation of those first tests were graver, more widespread and more dangerous for civilians' health than initially admitted. As we are well aware today, the humanitarian consequences of such detonations can be catastrophic and inflict unthinkable suffering, with potentially catastrophic global consequences.

By prohibiting nuclear-weapon testing and all other nuclear explosions worldwide, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) has become an essential component of the global nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation framework. Austria therefore reiterates its full confidence in the Treaty and in the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO), and we commend the Organization on its tireless work to end nuclear weapons testing. We are proud to host the CTBTO and its dedicated staff in Vienna. We welcome Executive Secretary Floyd's successful initiatives to advance the CTBTO's work and the Treaty's ratification, most recently by Equatorial Guinea, Sao Tome and Principe, the Solomon Islands and Sri Lanka. We will continue to actively support those efforts.

Austria reiterates that the norm against nuclear testing, as enshrined in the CTBT and committed to by its signatory and ratifying States, has to be upheld. The fact that some States are considering the withdrawal of their ratification is counterproductive and deeply worrisome. The CTBTO plays a crucial role in building trust and strengthening the norm against nuclear tests with its reliable and independent capabilities to verify States' respect for the norm through its International Monitoring System and the International Data Centre. As an important element for achieving a world free of nuclear weapons, the Monitoring System ensures that no nuclear detonation worldwide, underground, in the atmosphere, the oceans or in outer space goes undetected, while at the same time providing valuable data for civilian applications.

The Monitoring System also gives us confidence to detect any new tests by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the only country to test nuclear weapons in the twenty-first century, which we condemn in the strongest possible terms. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea will never have the status of a nuclear-weapon State, in accordance with the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). The Democratic People's Republic of Korea must finally comply with its obligations under Security Council resolutions to refrain from nuclear testing and launches using ballistic-missile technology. We continue our call for all relevant partners to urgently work to build sustainable peace and security in order to achieve the complete, verified and irreversible denuclearization of the Korean peninsula.

Yet another year has passed without the CTBT entering into force. In other words, the regime is not yet fully effective and operational. Austria thus calls on all remaining States, particularly annex 2 States that prevent the Treaty's entry into force, to ratify the CTBT without further delay or preconditions. That is particularly important for global security at a time when other important progress, agreements and commitments on disarmament and non-proliferation are being reversed, explicit nuclear threats made and nuclear arsenals upgraded or expanded. We must avoid a new nuclear-arms race, and the CTBT's entry into force can be an important element in preventing that.

In addition to the CTBT, a complementary norm against the testing of nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices that has now entered into legal force is, of course, the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). There are currently 92 signatories and 68 States parties to the TPNW, a treaty that complements and strengthens both the NPT and the CTBT. That complementarity is underscored by the fact the several new CTBT States parties pursued the ratification of the CTBT jointly with the TPNW. As pledged at the first Meeting of States Parties in June 2022 in Vienna, the Treaty's States parties continue to address the harm caused by nuclear-weapons use and testing and support all measures to bring the CTBT into force. We call on all States to cooperatively engage with the TPNW, including at the upcoming second Meeting of States Parties, in New York, and to ratify it.

Today the risk of nuclear detonations is higher than in decades, higher even than during the Cold War. The Doomsday Clock stands at an unprecedented 90 seconds

to midnight. We must work collectively to ensure that no one needs to live in fear of such detonations. Working towards the universalization of the CTBT and TPNW and strengthening the NPT can help us achieve our common goal of a world without nuclear weapons.

I therefore reiterate Austria's commitment to the entry into force and universalization of the CTBT and call on all States parties to work together to achieve that end. At a time when international law and the principles of multilateral cooperation are under increasing

pressure, it is all the more vital to stand up for treaties and institutions, such as the CTBT and the CTBTO, that are essential for our collective security and support our efforts for nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker for this commemorative meeting for this morning. We shall hear the remaining speakers this afternoon at 3 p.m. in this Hall.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.