



General Assembly

Seventy-eighth session

First Committee

11th meeting

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Official Records

Chair: Mr. Paulauskas (Lithuania)

The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

High-level exchange on the current state of affairs in the field of disarmament and arms control

The Chair: In accordance with its programme of work, the Committee will first engage in an exchange with the Director and Deputy to the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, including on follow-up to the resolutions and decisions adopted by the Committee at its previous sessions. That will be followed by a panel discussion with independent experts and high-level officials in the field of arms control and disarmament, as nominated by the regional groups. The Group of Latin American and Caribbean States has nominated the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (OPANAL) to make a presentation.

Following the exchanges, the Committee will begin the second phase of its work, namely, the thematic discussion on specific subjects and the introduction and consideration of all draft resolutions and decisions submitted under the agenda items allocated to the Committee.

In accordance with established practice, our discussions during this segment of our work will focus on specific issues grouped under the following seven agreed thematic clusters: “Nuclear weapons”, “Other weapons of mass destruction”, “Outer space (disarmament aspects)”, “Conventional weapons”, “Other disarmament measures and international security”, “Regional disarmament and security” and “Disarmament machinery”.

It is now my pleasure to extend a warm welcome to the Director and Deputy to the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Adedeji Ebo, and the Brazilian Special Representative for the Conference on Disarmament, Ambassador Flávio Damico, representing OPANAL.

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

I now give the floor to the Director and Deputy to the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs.

Mr. Ebo (United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs): I would like to congratulate and commend you, Mr. Chair, on your election as Chair of the First Committee.

I truly appreciate the opportunity to address the First Committee during this high-level exchange on behalf of the High Representative. As the High Representative provided comprehensive opening remarks just last week (see A/C.1/78/PV.2), I will refrain from repeating her assessment of the state of play of the various issues. However, I do want to highlight a few issues as reflected in the Committee’s discussions so far.

Throughout the general debate, we continue to hear concerns about the deteriorating international security environment. By extension, States have lamented the strain on disarmament, non-proliferation and the arms control architecture. Some have flagged

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the unacceptably high threat of the use of nuclear weapons, compounded by qualitative improvements to stockpiles. Ongoing challenges to the norm against the use of chemical weapons have also been underlined as a major concern of several delegations. Many members are deeply concerned about skyrocketing military spending and what that means for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Furthermore, in their discussions on topics ranging from outer space to cyberspace and from artificial intelligence to biotechnology, delegations have reflected on the viability of existing norms and governance frameworks. On the whole, States have rightly raised important and relevant questions. First, is the multilateral system actually working? Secondly, are governance structures fit for purpose and how effective are they in addressing the pressing challenges facing the international community? While there are no simple answers to those vital questions, there is a set of principles that underpin effective collective security, as stressed in the New Agenda for Peace — trust, solidarity and universality.

As delegations are aware, the Secretary-General presented his vision for a New Agenda for Peace in a policy brief that is intended to support States in their preparations for the Summit of the Future in 2024. The New Agenda for Peace policy brief includes a set of recommendations for a more effective multilateral system. The Secretary-General identifies concrete actions, for example, to address strategic risks and geopolitical divisions, prevent conflict and violence and seek new approaches to peace and potential domains of conflict. Critically, disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control are central to those actions. The New Agenda for Peace rightly characterizes disarmament as a powerful prevention tool that is central to comprehensive peace and security responses. The vision of the New Agenda for Peace directly connects disarmament with the attainment of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, while recognizing the links between disarmament and human rights, humanitarian action and women's empowerment. On the part of the Secretariat, we are delighted that the overall reception of the New Agenda for Peace, in particular its disarmament component, has been positive.

Looking ahead, the 2024 Summit of the Future will be an important opportunity to discuss the strategic importance of disarmament for broader peace and security and development objectives. Our hope is that

the New Agenda for Peace policy brief provides useful food for thought to that end. Ultimately, it is States that bear the primary responsibility for tackling current disarmament and international security challenges, while the Secretariat is certainly here to provide support. I would like to highlight a few specific substantive priorities for the consideration of States.

First, at a time when the risk of nuclear-weapon use is higher than it has been in decades, it is essential for Member States to reinforce the barrier against the use of nuclear weapons, accelerate progress towards their elimination and buttress the non-proliferation regime against a growing array of threats. Disarmament and non-proliferation are two sides of the same coin, and urgent progress is needed on both fronts. Accountability for the implementation of disarmament commitments must be pursued alongside the strengthening of the non-proliferation regime, particularly in the face of technological advances.

Secondly, it is critical that States recommit to the humanitarian imperative that underpins disarmament efforts with a view to reducing the human cost of weapons. Placing human beings at the centre of disarmament efforts is essential. From the human cost of unconstrained military spending to the devastating humanitarian toll of the increasing urbanization of conflict, States must recommit to saving people from violence. There are several practical actions that could support that objective. States are encouraged to endorse and fully implement the Political Declaration on Strengthening the Protection of Civilians from the Humanitarian Consequences Arising from the Use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas. Another priority is to achieve the universality of treaties banning inhumane and indiscriminate weapons, such as the Convention on Cluster Munitions, the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction and the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects and its protocols. Illicit small arms and light weapons continue to have excruciating and debilitating effects on many communities, often resulting in massive human suffering. Therefore, regional, subregional and national efforts to combat the diversion, proliferation and misuse of those weapons must be enhanced. For example, States are encouraged to consider setting

targets at the national and regional levels and to pursue whole-of-government approaches that integrate small arms and light weapons into development and violence-reduction initiatives.

Thirdly, States should continue to focus attention on the weaponization of emerging technologies and the dangers of potential domains of conflict. Technologies are evolving at the speed of light. We must ensure that we are taking action at a commensurate rate. Specifically, we must consider how to tackle the extension of conflicts and hostilities to cyberspace, building on concrete progress achieved through the General Assembly. We must consider how to prevent conflict in outer space by developing international norms, rules and principles to address threats through the relevant United Nations disarmament entities. We must consider how to prohibit lethal autonomous weapons systems, building on the progress made in multilateral discussions under the auspices of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, and we must address the peace and security implications of artificial intelligence, including by developing norms, rules and principles around the design, development and use thereof.

Fourthly and lastly, an essential ingredient to attaining those and other common goals is a well-functioning and effective disarmament machinery. It is critical that States consider revitalizing all the components of the disarmament machinery in order to optimize their respective roles. Establishing an intergovernmental process to discuss how to achieve that objective would be a good place to start.

Before concluding, I wish to address the traditional topic of follow-up to resolutions and decisions adopted at the previous session of the Committee and the presentation of reports of the Secretary-General. In line with recent practice, I will forgo providing a detailed account of the views of Member States received pursuant to requests by the General Assembly, which will be posted on our website in an annex to this statement. I wish to simply highlight a few key observations.

For the seventy-eighth session, 15 reports of the Secretary-General were presented to the First Committee pursuant to resolutions that include a mandate to request information or views of Member States. Two of those reports contain information submitted by Member States relating to military expenditures and the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms. The number of replies provided to

those transparency instruments this year were 59 and 55, respectively, an increase of more than 20 submissions for both instruments as compared to last year. Overall, however, the levels of response to those requests for views of Member States, including from sponsors and co-sponsors of the mandating resolutions, remain low and disappointing. That is particularly true for the reports addressing the issue of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. First-time reports continue to elicit the highest levels of response. This year, the report of the Secretary-General on the programme of action to advance responsible State behaviour in the use of information and communications technologies in the context of international security garnered the highest number of responses — 37 in total, including 31 of the mandating resolutions' co-sponsoring States. For the majority of reports, however, the reports have hovered around the same low number at consecutive sessions. With that in mind, I invite delegations to reflect on the type of reports that would best facilitate substantive discussions and the optimal type of information that could be submitted. The Secretariat stands ready to continue to support States in that regard.

The Chair: I now give the floor to the Special Representative of Brazil to the Conference of Disarmament, representing the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Mr. Damico (Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean): It is an honour and a pleasure to participate in this meaningful exchange today on behalf of the Secretary-General of the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (OPANAL). As such, I will underscore key perspectives from OPANAL regarding the prevailing trends in nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

The importance and relevance of multilateralism and international law remain indisputable. Although a minority may harbour reservations, the overwhelming majority ardently support the creation of resilient and effective global governance structures. Simultaneously, there is an evident need for coordinated responses to address the most critical global issues, which include disarmament and non-proliferation, through multilateral organizations, with a strong preference for the United Nations as the appropriate forum in which to do so. That is something that we in Latin America and the Caribbean adamantly believe.

More than five decades have passed since the inception of the international norm that gave rise to nuclear-weapon-free zones, which were notably pioneered by the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean, best known as the Treaty of Tlatelolco. However, it is imperative to underscore that that international norm holds even greater significance given the current global security environment. The establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones represents a regional effort aimed at strengthening the global nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament regimes, thereby reinforcing collective endeavours for peace and security. Moreover, the protocols to the treaties establishing such zones represent a mechanism through which the nuclear-weapon States undertook a legally binding commitment to respect the denuclearized status of such zones and not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against State parties to such treaties. Therefore, it is of the utmost importance that nuclear-weapon States engage in fruitful dialogue with all the nuclear-weapon-free zones in order to revise pending signatures and ratification processes, as well as their so-called interpretative declarations to the protocols that in practice represent reservations.

As I mentioned earlier during the general debate (see A/C.1/78/PV.9), the Member States of OPANAL recently inaugurated a dialogue mechanism with France, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom and the United States regarding their interpretative declarations with a view to reaching a lasting and mutually acceptable solution that will contribute to providing full and unequivocal security guarantees to the States of the nuclear-weapon-free zone in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Last year, the Secretary-General of OPANAL announced the intention of the Member States of the region to submit to the First Committee a draft resolution on undertaking a comprehensive study of nuclear-weapon-free zones in all their aspects. We are convinced that such a study will significantly advance the complete realization of the principles and objectives of the existing treaties establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones, while also lending crucial support to the establishment of new zones in regions in which they are needed. Although that draft resolution was not submitted this year, the members of the zone will continue to work towards achieving consensus on that initiative. With that objective in mind, and in the light of the opportunity to engage with the Deputy to the

High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Ebo, we eagerly anticipate receiving additional support for participating in a productive dialogue to craft a draft resolution that best aligns the interests of all States parties to treaties establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones with the mandate required for the successful realization of that comprehensive study.

The Chair: In keeping with the established practice of the Committee, I will now suspend the meeting to afford delegations an opportunity to have an interactive discussion with our panellists through an informal question-and-answer session.

The meeting was suspended at 3.25 p.m. and resumed at 3.50 p.m.

The Chair: On behalf of all delegations, I would like to thank all the panellists for their participation, and the Director and Deputy to the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Ebo, and Ambassador Flávio Damico, representing the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean, for being with us this afternoon.

Agenda items 90 to 106 (continued)

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

The Chair: The Committee will now begin the second phase of its work, namely, the thematic discussions on specific subjects and the introduction and consideration of all draft resolutions and decisions submitted under the agenda items allocated to the Committee. The thematic discussions will run from today, 13 October, to Thursday, 26 October, for a total of 13 meetings.

In accordance with established practice, the discussions during this segment of our work will focus on specific issues grouped under the seven agreed thematic clusters. I would like to remind all delegations that the time limit for statements during the thematic segment is five minutes when speaking in one's national capacity and seven minutes for statements on behalf of several delegations. There are 91 delegations inscribed on the list of speakers. In keeping with the indicative timetable for our thematic discussions, the Committee will now take up the cluster "Nuclear weapons".

Ms. Dhanutirto (Indonesia): I am honoured to speak on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (NAM).

NAM reiterates its concern about the threat to humankind posed by the continued existence of nuclear weapons. NAM expresses its concern about the sustained modernization of nuclear weapons, the continuous improvements of existing nuclear weapons and the development of new types of nuclear weapons, including new delivery vehicles. NAM is also concerned that the strategic dialogue among the nuclear-weapon States has remained limited. NAM takes note of the extension of the New START Treaty until 2026. NAM calls for the renewal of the commitments agreed within the framework of the treaty. NAM strongly calls on nuclear-weapon States to comply with their legal obligations and undertakings urgently and to totally eliminate their nuclear weapons in a transparent, irreversible and internationally verifiable manner. Pending the achievement of their total elimination, a universal, unconditional, non-discriminatory and legally binding instrument to effectively assure all non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons must be concluded as a high priority.

NAM stresses that nuclear disarmament, as the highest priority established by the first special session of the General Assembly on disarmament and as a multilateral legal obligation, should not be made conditional on confidence-building measures or other disarmament efforts. It also underlines that nuclear-risk-reduction measures cannot be a substitute for nuclear disarmament. NAM welcomes the multilateral efforts towards nuclear disarmament and takes note of the convening of the first Meeting of States Parties to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). NAM States parties and signatories to the TPNW are fully committed to its implementation and are engaging constructively in preparations for the second Meeting of States Parties.

NAM States parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) recognize the crucial role of the NPT in nuclear disarmament, nuclear non-proliferation and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. NAM States parties to the NPT call on nuclear-weapon States to demonstrate the political will to enable the eleventh NPT Review Conference to achieve concrete recommendations towards achieving nuclear disarmament, the ultimate objective of the NPT. NAM States parties to the NPT participated and

engaged actively in a constructive manner at the first session of the Preparatory Committee and look forward to the next two sessions of the Preparatory Committee with a view to the convening of a successful Review Conference in 2026. NAM States parties to the NPT are also concerned that all nuclear-weapon States, as well as some non-nuclear-weapon States, have increased the salience of nuclear weapons in their security and nuclear doctrines, policies and postures, which is inconsistent with the letter, spirit and objectives of the NPT. NAM States parties to the NPT reiterate the urgent need for accountability by nuclear-weapon States for their respective disarmament obligations under the NPT through benchmarks and concrete, measurable and time-bound actions on nuclear disarmament with established deadlines.

NAM welcomes the convening of the three sessions of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction, pursuant to decision 73/546. NAM continues to call on all States of the region, without exception, to actively participate in the Conference and negotiate in good faith and bring to a conclusion a legally binding treaty on the establishment of such a zone. NAM reiterates its full support for the establishment in the Middle East of a zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction. Pending the establishment of such a zone, it demands that Israel, the only country in the region that has not joined the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons or declared its intention to do so, renounce its possession of nuclear weapons, accede to the NPT without preconditions or further delay, promptly place all its nuclear facilities under the full-scope safeguards of the International Atomic Energy Agency and conduct its nuclear-related activities in conformity with the non-proliferation regime. NAM expresses great concern about the acquisition of a nuclear capability by Israel, which poses a serious and continuing threat to the security of neighbouring and other States and condemns Israel for continuing to develop and stockpile nuclear arsenals. Stability cannot be achieved in a region in which massive imbalances in military capabilities are maintained, particularly through the possession of nuclear weapons, which allow one party to threaten its neighbours and the region. That development will have potentially serious negative implications for security in the region, as well as the reliability of the global non-proliferation regime.

NAM reiterates its firm belief that non-proliferation policies should not undermine the inalienable right of States to acquire, have access to and import or export nuclear material, equipment and technology for peaceful purposes. NAM reaffirms the inalienable right of each State to develop the research, production and use of nuclear energy. NAM recognizes that the responsibility for nuclear safety and nuclear security rests with individual States. Any multilateral norms, guidelines or rules in nuclear security should be pursued and agreed within the framework of the International Atomic Energy Agency. NAM also stresses the significance of achieving universal adherence to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, especially by nuclear-weapon States, which should contribute, inter alia, to the process of nuclear disarmament.

Under this cluster, NAM submitted draft resolution A/C.1/78/L.8, entitled "Follow-up to the 2013 high-level meeting of the General Assembly on nuclear disarmament", in order to update the annual resolution on that subject, the most recent of which is resolution 77/47. NAM would appreciate the support of all Member States for the draft resolution and remains committed to cooperating for the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

Mr. Dang (Viet Nam): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

The current discussion on the issue of nuclear weapons demonstrates both the long-standing and emerging challenges on multiple fronts. ASEAN is convinced that nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation are best addressed by strengthening multilateralism and enhancing cooperation, with all countries fulfilling their obligations and commitments responsibly. ASEAN supports the common efforts of the international community towards realizing a world free of nuclear weapons. ASEAN remains concerned about the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons and the unacceptable risks posed by their continued existence. ASEAN reiterates that the total elimination of nuclear weapons is the only way to guarantee against their use and threat of use.

ASEAN reaffirms its recognition of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) as the cornerstone of the global regime of nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and peaceful use of nuclear energy. We acknowledge the recent convening

of the first session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2026 Review Conference of the Parties to the NPT. Strong political will among NPT States parties is essential in preserving the credibility and integrity of the Treaty. We urge nuclear-weapon States to fulfil their disarmament obligations and commitments through measurable, timebound actions and reporting, facilitating constructive engagement by non-nuclear weapon States.

Pending the total elimination of nuclear weapons, ASEAN reaffirms its collective position against nuclear tests and continues to stress the importance of achieving universal adherence to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) without delay. ASEAN continues to call upon the remaining States listed in annex 2 of the CTBT to sign and ratify the CTBT as soon as possible for its entry into force.

ASEAN maintains that the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) is a historic agreement that contributes to global nuclear disarmament and complements other existing nuclear-disarmament and non-proliferation instruments, including the NPT, the CTBT and nuclear-weapon-free zone treaties. We note that the second Meeting of States parties to the TPNW will be held later this year. In line with the foregoing, ASEAN supports the Secretary-General's Agenda for Disarmament as a comprehensive step to advance nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation in a concrete, holistic and integrated manner. ASEAN takes note of the Secretary General's New Agenda for Peace, which outlines his vision for multilateral efforts for peace and security, based on international law, for a world in transition.

We would like to stress that it is necessary for the nuclear-weapon States to provide unconditional, legally binding negative security assurances and adopt a no-first-use policy regarding nuclear weapons, as well as to reduce and eliminate the risk of the unintentional and accidental use of such weapons, pending the total and complete elimination of nuclear weapons. Additionally, the nuclear-weapon States must make an unequivocal commitment not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States and within nuclear-weapon-free zones.

ASEAN reiterates that every State has the right to the safe and peaceful use of nuclear technology, in particular for its economic and social development. We reaffirm our commitment to strengthening our

cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), especially through the implementation of the 2019 practical arrangements on cooperation in the areas of nuclear science, technology and applications, and nuclear safety, security and safeguards between ASEAN and the IAEA

ASEAN supports every effort to create and enhance the role of nuclear-weapon-free zones and their contribution to the global disarmament and non-proliferation regimes, including in the Middle East. We reiterate our commitment to preserving the South-East Asia region as a zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction, as enshrined in the ASEAN Charter and the Treaty on the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone (SEANWFZ). In that regard, 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 reservations and provide prior formal assurance of that commitment in writing 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 the efforts of all parties to resolve all outstanding issues in accordance with the objectives and principles of the SEANWFZ Treaty.

ASEAN will be submitting its updated resolution on the SEANWFZ Treaty under the agenda item "General and complete disarmament", and it counts on Member States' support in that regard. ASEAN is committed to further enhancing and strengthening the implementation of the SEANWFZ Treaty through the Plan of Action for the period 2023-2027 with renewed commitment and a stronger emphasis on concrete actions.

Let me conclude by reiterating ASEAN's commitment to the important work of the First Committee in realizing the goal of the total elimination of nuclear weapons in the interest of peace, security and sustainable development for all.

Mr. Sánchez Kiesslich (Mexico): I take the floor on behalf of the States parties and signatory States to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW).

We remain gravely concerned that nine States still possess approximately 13,000 nuclear weapons. Many of those weapons are on high alert and ready to be launched within minutes. The fragility of the current international context exacerbates the risks that those weapons will be used. This underscores the precarious nature of the nuclear status quo, which impacts international peace and security for all.

Any use of nuclear weapons would inflict indiscriminate destruction, death and displacement, as well as profound long-term damage to the environment, ecosystems and sustainable development, impact the global economy, food security and the health of current and future generations, including having a disproportionate impact on women and girls.

The catastrophic consequences of any detonation of nuclear weapons cannot be adequately addressed. Those would consequently transcend national borders and pose grave implications for humankind's future. Past experience of the use and testing of nuclear weapons has demonstrated the unacceptable humanitarian and environmental consequences caused by their immense destructive capability and indiscriminate nature. In that regard, the prevention of those consequences must be at the centre of our collective efforts to achieve and maintain a world without those weapons. We firmly believe that it is in the interests of all States to engage in discussions on the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons to further broaden and deepen understanding. We welcome the International Committee of the Red Cross's and civil society's ongoing engagement on that matter.

Moreover, we remain concerned about threats to use nuclear weapons, which are inherent in deterrence doctrines, the normalization of references to the possible use of nuclear weapons and increased nuclear rhetoric. We unequivocally condemn any and all nuclear threats irrespective of the circumstances. We stress that any use or threat of use of nuclear weapons is a violation of international law, including the Charter of the United Nations. We reject the use of nuclear weapons as instruments of policy, coercion, intimidation and heightening of tensions, as well as the supposed validity of doctrines based on the threat of the actual use of nuclear weapons and the alleged security value of nuclear deterrence.

We reaffirm that the establishment of a legally binding regime on the prohibition on nuclear weapons is a necessary and effective measure in preventing a

nuclear arms race and achieving nuclear disarmament. The prohibition constitutes a fundamental step towards the irreversible, verifiable and transparent elimination of nuclear weapons needed for the attainment and maintenance of a world free of nuclear weapons, in line with the objectives of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and in accordance with the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations and in support of international humanitarian law.

We are also convinced that a complete ban on nuclear weapons is the most effective legal means to prevent proliferation, and thus the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons is the embodiment of such an objective. As fully committed States parties to the NPT, we continue to fully implement our obligations, comply with our responsibilities and agreements under the NPT and under other complementary treaties, such as the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty; treaties establishing nuclear-weapon free-zones, which are examples of the full commitment of many regions to denuclearization; and the TPNW itself.

We recognize that the vast majority of the NPT parties agree that the only guarantee against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons lies in their total elimination. Pending the total elimination of nuclear weapons, all nuclear-weapon States and other States in possession of nuclear weapons must commit to never use or threaten to use those weapons under any circumstances.

In that regard, we urge the nuclear-weapon States to reinvigorate their efforts to fully and urgently implement the obligation regarding nuclear disarmament contained in article VI of the NPT, as well as the actions and commitments agreed upon at NPT Review Conferences. The unequivocal undertaking to eliminate the arsenals needs to be fully realized.

We urge all States that have not yet done so to join the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) without delay and without preconditions. We appeal to all States to engage cooperatively with the treaty and work with us in support of our shared goal of a world free of nuclear weapons. We encourage all States to attend the second Meeting of States Parties to the TPNW, to be held in November.

Believing in the transformative power of cooperation and diplomacy, we trust that a united front against nuclear weapons can address collective

concerns and formulate solutions beneficial to global peace. We are fully committed to achieving those goals through multilateralism.

Mr. Fuller (Belize): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the 14 States members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM).

CARICOM is very concerned that States Members of the United Nations, despite their declared intentions, have not made progress in the area of nuclear disarmament. Meanwhile, there are countries that are modernizing their nuclear-weapon systems, developing new weapons and making new threats. CARICOM urges all nuclear-weapon States and others that possess such weapons and their allies to reaffirm their assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States against the use of those weapons. We call on those States to comply with their legal obligations and resume earnest, effective steps towards non-proliferation and denuclearization through transparent, complete and verifiable disarmament.

We urge members to redouble their efforts in the Conference on Disarmament to achieve the total elimination of nuclear weapons. We believe that nuclear-risk-reduction measures are inadequate. The acceptable standard for a safe and secure world is total nuclear disarmament.

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons continues to be the foundation of the global nuclear disarmament architecture. Despite the failure of its tenth Review Conference to arrive at a consensus outcome document, we call on all States parties to consider voluntarily pursuing the commitments contained in the final draft. In the meantime, we call on all members to redouble their efforts to ensure that concrete and effective recommendations on disarmament are adopted at the eleventh Review Conference.

Bearing in mind that the existence and testing of nuclear weapons, as well as the threat of use of such weapons, puts us all at risk, CARICOM emphasizes that strong political will from each of us will create the environment for the security of all of us. Stockpiling, testing or the threat of use of nuclear weapons should never be included in the security doctrine of States. The promotion of, or reliance on, nuclear deterrence as a security strategy merely perpetuates the false notion that we are safer by the assurance of mutual destruction. CARICOM continues to reject that approach and reminds all States that the very existence of nuclear weapons presents an unacceptable risk to both people and the planet.

CARICOM member States therefore support the implementation of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), which entered into force in 2021. CARICOM welcomes the first Meeting of States Parties, held in June 2022, and looks forward to working within the framework of the action plan adopted at the meeting. All CARICOM member States are either parties to, signatories of, or in the process of acceding to, the TPNW. In that connection, we look forward to the convening of the second Meeting of States Parties to the TPNW, to be held later this year.

As parties to the Treaty of Tlatelolco, CARICOM States are proud to be part of the first nuclear-weapon-free zone encompassing a highly populated region, namely, Latin America and the Caribbean. We remain committed to ensuring that the Americas remains a zone of peace and that we can safeguard, to the greatest extent possible, the security and well-being of our citizens against the incalculable devastation that would be occasioned by any nuclear detonation in the region.

We use this opportunity to again decry the undue and unconscionable expenditure made on nuclear weapons and systems. Countries are continuing to increase spending on their nuclear arsenals, including to modernize and update them, contrary to commitments to disarm, decommission and destroy them. According to research, nuclear-armed States spent approximately \$82 billion in 2021, and approximately \$89 billion in 2022, on their nuclear arsenals. Trillions are being budgeted for upgrades.

On the other hand, development goals and pledges remain unfulfilled, the Sustainable Development Goals are underfunded and climate financing is inadequate. CARICOM again reiterates its call on nuclear-weapon States to take urgent steps to reverse the role of nuclear weapons in their security strategies and instead to direct funding to policies that focus on prevention, peace and sustainable development. There is no doubt that investment in those areas will deliver greater security guarantees for all.

CARICOM also views the nuclear disarmament imperative through the humanitarian lens. The consequences of the testing of, or of the intended or accidental use or detonation of, nuclear weapons are incalculable. There remain today very many people who have suffered and continue to suffer from the effects of such testing and use. To some extent, we may

never really know the full effect that the testing and use of nuclear weapons have had on our environment and the ripple effects on us over generations. CARICOM believes that there should be due accountability to victims and supports the positive obligations entailed in the TPNW.

To conclude, CARICOM joins the Secretary-General in calling on States

“to recommit to a world free from nuclear weapons and to end the erosion of the nuclear disarmament and arms control regime” (A/78/PV.4, p. 3).

I reiterate CARICOM’s absolute opposition to the development, deployment, testing, upgrading, hosting and use of nuclear weapons. We reaffirm our commitment to working towards a world free of nuclear weapons, as such weapons serve only to diminish international peace and security. That is not only an ideal but also a prerequisite to truly deliver any guarantee of peace and security for the peoples of our United Nations,

Mr. Hmoud (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, the Group of Arab States aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.

The Arab Group reiterates its principled positions on disarmament and international security and on the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), which represents the cornerstone of the disarmament and non-proliferation system. We emphasize the importance of fundamental commitments, particularly in the light of today’s extremely grave geopolitical upheavals, as well as the continued erosion of bilateral conventions on arms control and reducing nuclear arsenals.

The Arab Group rejects the fact that nuclear-weapon States continue to adopt military doctrines that allow the use of or the threat to use nuclear weapons. Moreover, some States seek to develop and enhance both the quantity and quality of their nuclear weapons, as well as nuclear-sharing measures that contradict the spirit and objectives of the NPT. In that context, the Arab Group underscores the need for the total and internationally verifiable elimination of nuclear weapons in accordance with article VI of the NPT.

The Arab Group also notes that, while confidence-building and reducing the risks of nuclear weapons are important measures, they are not a

substitute for the main internationally agreed objective, namely, the elimination of nuclear weapons through a legally binding agreement to be negotiated without further delay in the framework of the Conference on Disarmament.

The Arab Group expresses its regret that, for the second time in a row, a final outcome document could not be adopted at the tenth NPT Review Conference. We call for the success of the eleventh Review Conference through the adoption of an inclusive outcome document that includes clear measures for strengthening the credibility and sustainability of the NPT by implementing the agreed commitments. The Arab Group also expresses its concern about the continued failure to achieve tangible progress in nuclear disarmament, as well as the repeated failure in implementing the relevant commitments adopted at the NPT Review Conferences held in 1995, 2000 and 2010.

Nuclear-weapon States have continued to refuse to establish any specific timetable for the implementation of the commitments to completely eliminate nuclear weapons. The Arab Group also reiterates the importance of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), in the negotiation of which the Group actively participated. That treaty is also important for disarmament, including nuclear disarmament, as the possession of, use of or threat to use such weapons contradict the most basic rules of international law and pose a direct threat to international peace and security. The Arab Group emphasizes that the TPNW does not contradict the NPT but assists in achieving its goals leading to a world free of nuclear weapons.

The Arab Group stresses the importance of making international efforts to strengthen the universality of multilateral conventions and treaties on nuclear disarmament and other weapons of mass destruction. Therefore, we stress that the nuclear-weapon States have a special responsibility under the action plan on nuclear disarmament adopted by the 2010 NPT Review Conference to ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). We would also like to encourage States to join the CTBT, especially the annex 2 States that have not joined it to date and that continue to operate nuclear facilities that are not under the comprehensive safeguards regime, as well as those Member States that operate nuclear facilities that are in violation of the treaty. The Arab Group also calls for continued efforts to facilitate the entry into force of the CTBT, which was signed more than 25 years ago.

The Arab Group stresses that eliminating nuclear weapons from the Middle East is an international responsibility shared by the Group, and that other parties must commit to that since the credibility of the NPT will otherwise be at risk. The Group emphasizes the need to adopt the immediate and practical measures called for in the annual draft resolution submitted by the Arab Group, entitled "The risk of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East" (A/C.1/78/L.2), which enjoys broad regional support.

The Arab Group expresses its concern about the continued security threat arising from Israel's refusal to join the NPT. It remains the only State in the Middle East that has not joined the Treaty and that refuses to place all its nuclear facilities under the comprehensive safeguards regime of the International Atomic Energy Agency. We reiterate that the ongoing delay in the implementation of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East is a serious setback, as it impedes progress not only in the area of nuclear non-proliferation but also in the process of achieving peace and security, particularly in the light of the repeated failure to honour the relevant commitments made at the 2000 and 2010 Review Conferences. In that context, the Arab Group welcomes the convening of the three sessions of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction, as well as the convening of its fourth session, to be held next month under the presidency of Libya. The Arab Group urges the States that are invited to attend the session to do so and continue to engage in constructive discussions.

In conclusion, the Arab Group calls for achieving universality of the NPT and stresses the need to maintain balance among the three pillars of the Treaty.

Mr. Mahmud (Nigeria): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Group of African States. The Group associates itself with the statement made earlier today on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.

Nuclear weapons represent a grave, existential threat to humankind. If nuclear-weapon States continue to possess and modernize those weapons of mass destruction, our collective security cannot be assured. The Group therefore welcomes and underscores the importance of resolution 73/34 as an integral part of multilateral disarmament efforts.

The African Group supports the principle of complete nuclear disarmament as a prerequisite for maintaining international peace and security. The Group

avers that achieving the total elimination of nuclear weapons should be the overall objective of the United Nations. The Group wishes to voice its deep concern about the resistance by the nuclear-weapon States to accomplishing the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals in accordance with their legal obligations under article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).

In that regard, we stress that the universalization of the Non-Proliferation Treaty is dependent upon strict compliance with its three pillars, which are disarmament, non-proliferation and the peaceful use of nuclear energy. In that regard, the African Group is deeply disappointed about another failed NPT Review Conference, which could not make any progress on the implementation of agreed commitments. The tenth Review Conference was an opportunity for the nuclear-weapon States to reignite their commitment to the NPT and save humankind from the possibility of any devastating humanitarian consequences of a nuclear detonation or nuclear war. It is on that premise that we, the African Group, renew our commitment to a world free of nuclear weapons and state our disappointment about the unprecedented consecutive failures of the NPT Review Conferences.

The persistent failure of the NPT Review Conferences is eroding the credibility of the Treaty, with possible dire consequences for humankind and the environment. It is also pertinent to note that the ongoing stockpiling and modernization of nuclear arsenals by nuclear-weapon States and the continuation of the use and threat of use of nuclear weapons in military and security doctrines, as well as nuclear sharing and extended nuclear guarantees, defy the letter, spirit and purpose of the NPT.

The African Group reaffirms the central role of nuclear-weapon-free zones in the consolidation of the NPT, as well as its significance in addressing nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation across all regions of the world. In that context, the African Group remains committed to the Treaty of Pelindaba, which reaffirms the status of Africa as a nuclear-weapon-free zone and bans the stationing and testing of nuclear-explosive devices in the entire African territory.

The African Group reiterates its deep concern about the non-implementation of the commitments and obligations contained in the resolution on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction

adopted at the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference. Similarly, the Group recalls the convening of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction, pursuant to decision 73/546.

The African Group underscores the importance of continued respect for the inalienable rights to the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and stresses the central role of the International Atomic Energy Agency in that regard through its continued technical support and cooperation, as well as by maximizing the use of science and technology for socioeconomic development.

The African Group calls for critical humanitarian considerations to be included in all deliberations on nuclear weapons at the current session. The Group notes the strides made by States and continues to call on all States, especially the nuclear-weapon States, to maintain their consideration of the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of the use of those weapons on human health, the environment and vital economic resources, among other things, as well as to take the necessary measures and steps to ensure the dismantling and renunciation of those weapons.

The total elimination of nuclear weapons remains the only absolute guarantee against their use or threat of use. In that context, the Group reiterates the urgent need for our planet to be free of nuclear weapons, as their presence constitutes a grave threat to international peace and security and an essential threat to humankind.

Africa supports the objective of complete nuclear disarmament as the utmost prerequisite for maintaining international peace and security. It is in that connection that the African Group recalls the historic entry into force of the landmark Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), which prohibits but is not limited to the development, testing, manufacture, acquisition, possession and stockpiling of nuclear weapons and other explosive devices. On that note, the Group welcomes the preparations for the second Meeting of States Parties to the TPNW, to be held in New York from 27 November to 1 December. The Group also reaffirms its support for the Vienna Action Plan, which was adopted to facilitate the effective and timely implementation of the TPNW and its objectives.

The African Group wishes to reiterate the importance of achieving universal adherence to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), taking into consideration the special responsibilities of nuclear-

weapon States. The Group believes that the CTBT offers hope of halting further modernization and development or vertical and horizontal proliferation of nuclear weapons, thereby contributing to the goal of nuclear disarmament. The Group calls on the international community to renew its support for promoting the entry into force of the CTBT and encourages all States that have not yet done so to ratify the CTBT.

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

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

A key priority for the EU is to uphold and preserve the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) — which remains the cornerstone of the global nuclear non-proliferation regime, the essential foundation for the pursuit of nuclear disarmament in accordance with its article VI and an important element of the development of nuclear energy applications for peaceful purposes — in addition to promoting its universalization and strengthening its implementation. We reiterate the EU's strong, resolute and continuous support for all three pillars of the NPT, and it will continue to promote the comprehensive, balanced and substantive full implementation of the action plan on nuclear disarmament of the 2010 NPT Review Conference.

The EU deeply regrets that a consensus report was not adopted at the first session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2026 NPT Review Conference, owing to an unconstructive attitude by some States parties. We appreciate, however, the reflections of the Chair on structuring the discussions of the second session of the Preparatory Committee. We were encouraged by the constructive and meaningful engagement of the overwhelming majority of States parties, including some nuclear-weapon States. We need to move forward in the framework of future Preparatory Committee sessions in order to achieve tangible results. The factual summary prepared by the Chair of the Preparatory Committee is a useful, strong and balanced basis in that respect.

Russia's actions and threats to use nuclear force are provocative, dangerous, escalatory and entirely unacceptable. We also wish to recall that, on 3 January

2022, Russia signed the joint statement of the leaders of the five nuclear-weapon States, which reaffirmed, inter alia, that a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought, and it reiterated that commitment in a joint statement with China issued on 22 March. We call on Russia to respect the commitments contained therein, along with its obligations under international law, including international humanitarian law and the Charter of the United Nations.

In the same vein, the EU condemns the announced deployment of Russian nuclear weapons in the territory of Belarus, which is inconsistent with the commitment Belarus made in the Budapest Memorandum. Belarus can still make the choice to reverse its decision to host Russian nuclear weapons. We therefore call on the Belarus authorities to put an immediate stop to their support for Russia's unprovoked, unjustified and illegal war of aggression against Ukraine and to reverse any decision that would contribute to heightening tensions in the region.

EU member States remain committed to the pursuit of nuclear disarmament in accordance with article VI of the NPT. We stress the need for concrete progress towards the full implementation of article VI, especially through the overall reduction of the global stockpile of nuclear weapons, taking into account the special responsibility of the States that possess the largest nuclear arsenals.

The reduction of deployed strategic nuclear arsenals under the New START Treaty, enhanced notably by its robust verification mechanism, contributes to the implementation of article VI of the NPT through the overall reduction in the global stockpile of deployed nuclear weapons. The EU is deeply concerned about Russia's suspension of the New START Treaty. We call on Russia to immediately return to compliance with the New START Treaty and to fulfil all its obligations thereunder.

Given the rapid and extensive build-up of China's nuclear arsenal, we call on China to join future arms control agreements and respond positively to calls for an arms control dialogue as a first step. We urge China to immediately take measures to improve transparency on its nuclear weapons and doctrine, refrain from further build-up — which is not in line with its commitments under the NPT — and pursue risk-reduction measures.

The EU recognizes that negative security assurances strengthen the nuclear non-proliferation regime and calls on all nuclear-weapon States that have not yet

done so to reaffirm the existing security assurances noted in the relevant Security Council resolutions. The EU acknowledges the critical importance of existing nuclear-weapon-free zones for peace and security and remains committed to the implementation of the resolution on the establishment of such a zone in the Middle East adopted at the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference.

The EU reiterates its resolute commitment to, and continued support for, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), which is a key element of the global nuclear non-proliferation architecture that was endorsed unanimously by the Security Council in resolution 2231 (2015). In that regard, we are deeply concerned by the successive and recent International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) reports documenting the alarming level of Iran's nuclear programme, including the most recent worrisome information about the regression in the implementation of the provisions of the IAEA's NPT Safeguards Agreement with Iran. The risk of a nuclear proliferation crisis in the region has further increased as a result of Iran's nuclear trajectory. We strongly urge Iran to reverse its nuclear trajectory and return to its legal obligations and political commitments. The EU calls on all countries to support the implementation of resolution 2231 (2015).

The EU deeply regrets that the Syrian Arab Republic still needs to remedy its long-standing non-compliance with its Safeguards Agreement under the NPT. We once again urge the Syrian Arab Republic to cooperate fully with the IAEA to resolve all outstanding issues. In order to rebuild confidence in its nuclear programme, we also call on the Syrian Arab Republic to bring into force an additional protocol to its NPT Safeguards Agreement without further delay, in line with the IAEA Board of Governors resolution of June 2011.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea can never have the status of a nuclear-weapon-State under the terms of the Non-Proliferation Treaty. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea must abandon its nuclear weapons, any other weapons of mass destruction and its ballistic missiles and related programmes in a complete, verifiable and irreversible manner, in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions. We call on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to return to compliance with the NPT and its Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement and to sign and ratify an additional protocol thereto. We urge the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to sign

and ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) without any preconditions or further delay. The EU urges the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to resume meaningful dialogue with all the main parties. The EU is ready to work with all relevant parties, promote any meaningful diplomatic process aimed at building sustainable peace and security and take steps aimed at pursuing the complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization of the Korean peninsula.

The EU is deeply concerned about with the recent announcements by the Russian Federation with regard to a possible reconsideration of its ratification of the CTBT. As mentioned by the Executive Secretary —

The Chair: I apologize to the representative of the European Union. He has exceeded the time limit for his statement. His full statement will be made available on the e-deleGATE portal.

Ms. Saran (South Africa): South Africa aligns itself with the statements delivered by the representative of Nigeria, on behalf of the Group of African States, and by the representative of Indonesia, on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.

South Africa has always emphasized the humanitarian imperatives that underpin our search for a world without the threat posed by the possession, use and proliferation of nuclear weapons. In spite of that, we now find ourselves globally in a situation in which the major global security threat arises from the acrimonious relationship between nuclear-weapon States, which endangers the lives of each and every one of us. The continued possession of nuclear weapons by a handful of States is one of the existential threats facing humankind. It is a human-made threat, and it exists because of the will of those States to continue to retain the ability to inflict catastrophic consequences on humankind under a false and misguided notion that it will deter aggression.

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) remains the cornerstone for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. Regrettably, article VI of the NPT continues to be undermined.

An especially growing concern is the increase in the number of States that emphasize the value of nuclear deterrence and place greater reliance on nuclear weapons in their military and security doctrines. The approach of non-nuclear-weapon States that call for disarmament while under extended nuclear deterrence

guarantees needs to be assessed. It is essential for nuclear-weapon States to stabilize geopolitical relations by renewing trust among them, having forthright engagement and committing to eliminate their nuclear arsenals in a time-bound and verifiable manner. That will make all of us safer.

Now more than ever, urgent action is required to fully implement the obligations under the NPT, notably, nuclear disarmament and the commitments and undertakings entered into at the Review Conferences. More needs to be done, particularly by nuclear-weapon States in the area of nuclear disarmament. South Africa restates its call for concrete and measurable actions from nuclear-weapon States and States under extended nuclear deterrence guarantees to implement nuclear disarmament. We need to break the status quo of non-action by those States on nuclear disarmament.

It must be reiterated that the NPT, as the cornerstone for the non-proliferation and disarmament architecture, is complemented by numerous other international and regional instruments, including the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT).

The TPNW is a testimony of the concerns of the international community with regard to nuclear weapons. The moral and ethical imperatives that inspired and motivated the creation of the TPNW must be emphasized, especially the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons. The TPNW also represents the highest non-proliferation standard that any State can commit to, thereby strengthening and complementing the NPT. It must be reiterated that the TPNW will not replace the obligations and commitments that States have already made under the NPT and other instruments.

It is South Africa's hope that the TPNW will serve as a catalyst for much overdue progress in nuclear disarmament. We take this opportunity to encourage all States that have not done so, to ratify the TPNW and join the community of nations that are committed to a world free of nuclear weapons. They have a moral duty to join, and we have a moral duty to invite them in, under the TPNW umbrella.

As we have previously stated, the CTBT is a crucial pillar in the maintenance of international peace and security. The failure to bring that Treaty into force further weakens and destabilizes the nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament agenda. The lack of progress in the ratification of the CTBT, especially by annex 2 States, is of great concern.

We once again stress that nuclear weapons are inhumane weapons, and it is inconceivable that their use, under any circumstance, could ever be consistent with international law.

I will end quickly. My delegation has the honour to once again submit for consideration draft resolution A/C.1/78/L.32, entitled "Ethical imperatives for a nuclear-weapon-free world", and we welcome all support for that draft resolution.

Mr. Aron (Indonesia): Indonesia associates itself with the statements delivered, respectively, on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and the States parties and signatory States to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW).

Nowadays, the threat of a nuclear war has become ever present. With more than 12,900 nuclear weapons in the possession of nuclear-armed States and the playing of another dangerous game of nuclear deterrence, we are facing the risk of use of nuclear weapons.

The current international security environment should not be used to justify the continued possession of nuclear weapons, nor should it justify the use or threat of use of such weapons. On the contrary, it should be the main reason to ensure the total elimination of nuclear weapons. Inaction is not an option.

Against that backdrop, allow me to put forward three points.

First, reinvigorating political commitment is a must. Waning commitment from nuclear-weapon States must be addressed. Nuclear-weapon States must follow through on their obligations under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and be open, accountable and risk-averse in order to make further progress towards a world without nuclear weapons. The trend of countries joining military and nuclear alliances is also contrary to our commitment to nuclear disarmament. We therefore must revisit our commitment, including through our deliberations in the upcoming Summit of the Future.

Secondly, the next step is the need to translate commitments into concrete actions to achieve nuclear disarmament. We must walk the talk. The nuclear disarmament architecture must be strengthened. We need to seize the momentum towards the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), as well as the universalization of the TPNW. We should

also move towards the institutionalization of nuclear-weapon-free zones, where such weapons cease to exist, and the immediate entry into force of the CTBT.

Thirdly, the long-overdue negotiations must start immediately. We need to prioritize the negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament on a comprehensive convention on nuclear weapons, legally binding instruments on effective international assurances for non-nuclear-weapon States against the use and threat of use of nuclear weapons and a balanced treaty banning the production of fissile material for use in nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices.

Our commitment to pursue nuclear disarmament should be guided by the spirit of multilateralism. Let us do justice to multilateralism by allowing the United Nations to work, through this First Committee, towards the goal of the total elimination of nuclear weapons and to protect future generations from the scourge of nuclear war.

Mr. Ahmed (Egypt): At the outset, Egypt aligns itself with the statements made, respectively, on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, the Group of African States and the Group of Arab States and wishes to make several additional remarks.

Egypt continues to be deeply concerned about the grave threat posed to humankind and to international peace and security by the continued possession of nuclear weapons by a few States. My country reaffirms that the total, verifiable and irreversible elimination of nuclear weapons is the only guarantee against their proliferation, use or threat of use.

Arguments that set preconditions for or place obstacles against the implementation of nuclear disarmament obligations and commitments will lead only to the weakening of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), taking into consideration the unprecedented failure of two consecutive NPT Review Conferences to arrive at final documents. The rising levels of tension at the global level, coupled with the growth and modernization of nuclear arsenals, increase the risk of the intentional or accidental use of nuclear weapons to one of the highest levels ever. We are also concerned with the emerging erosion in bilateral arrangements for the reduction of nuclear weapons.

It is indeed distressing to continue to face this unnerving nightmare after close to five decades of defining nuclear disarmament as the highest priority. While we acknowledge the possible positive contributions

of confidence-building and risk-reduction measures, they are not in any form or by any means a substitute for the objective of the elimination of all nuclear weapons.

Immediate progress is what is urgently required to restore trust and faith in the current regime, including by reconfirming the validity of all previous obligations and commitments, particularly by nuclear-weapon State parties, by implementing those obligations and commitments unconditionally, and by providing specific, practical and time-bound measures to renounce their nuclear arsenals. In that vein, we recall the call by many States for strengthened accountability and transparency by nuclear-weapon States in their reporting on the implementation of their obligations under article VI of the NPT.

In that connection, Egypt is pleased to join our partners at the New Agenda Coalition in presenting the annual resolution entitled “Towards a nuclear-weapon-free world: accelerating the implementation of nuclear disarmament commitments”, this year as draft resolution A/C.1/78/L.33.

The decades-long obstruction of the implementation of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East and countless similar resolutions is eroding the credibility and relevance of the disarmament and non-proliferation regime and multilateral norms at large. The lack of progress on that matter impedes a meaningful and effective approach to the root causes of instability and security threats in our region, which already faces a plethora of security threats and challenges. The 1995 resolution was, and will always be, a cornerstone and a fundamental basis for the indefinite extension of the NPT, and we call upon the three co-sponsors of that resolution to undertake their responsibilities in that regard. Egypt will submit its annual draft resolution on the matter to the First Committee, as will the Arab Group.

In that regard, we believe that the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction represents an important contribution to the full and effective implementation of the 1995 resolution, through an institutional, inclusive and consensus-based process. The Conference has successfully convened three sessions, which witnessed considerable and incremental procedural and substantive progress. We look forward to the fourth session of the Conference, to be held in November. We reiterate that the

Conference aims at reaching arrangements freely arrived at by the States of the region on the basis of consensus. It is one more genuine endeavour to achieve a long-standing agreed international commitment in a non-discriminatory manner and without singling out any State in the region. We sincerely hope that all invited members and observers will participate in subsequent sessions of the Conference, which could contribute to strengthening the international nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime and improving security conditions in our region.

In the same vein, we also count on the continued support of all Member States for the Conference, for the annual draft resolution that Egypt has submitted on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East (A/C.1/78/L.1) and for restoring the consensus around the very legitimate principles and purposes underpinning that draft resolution. We also call on Member States to support the draft resolution that we submitted on behalf of the Arab Group entitled “The risk of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East” (A/C.1/78/L.2). We consider the support of all Member States for our draft resolutions to be proof of their commitment to nuclear disarmament, collective security and sustainable peace in the Middle East and globally.

Mr. Peñalver Portal (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): We align ourselves with the statements made by the representative of Indonesia, on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, and the representative of Mexico, on behalf of the States parties to, and signatories of, the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW).

The world seems to have forgotten the horrific consequences of the nuclear weapons dropped by the United States in 1945 on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, which unleashed terror and led to the deaths of hundreds of thousands of people. It is unjustifiable that there are still approximately 13,000 nuclear weapons in existence — more than sufficient to completely destroy the planet. Nuclear-weapon States continue to modernize their arsenals. A number of them have deployed new systems for nuclear armament for their potential use. In addition to that is the repeated failure of the most recent Review Conference of States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, which takes us further away from the goal of a nuclear-weapon-free world. The United Nations Disarmament Commission has also been unable to adopt specific recommendations on nuclear disarmament.

One positive result reached in the past few years is the adoption and entry into force of the TPNW, which is the first international legal framework to codify the illegitimacy and illegality of nuclear weapons in international law by categorically banning the existence, use and the threat of use of those weapons and any form of nuclear testing. We advocate for the universalization of the TPNW, and we trust in the success of the second Meeting of TPNW States Parties. The entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty is also essential.

We are proud to belong to the first nuclear-weapon-free zone in a densely populated part of the world, which was subsequently also proclaimed a zone of peace, which makes us even more committed to promoting a world free of nuclear weapons, in line with the principles of Cuba’s foreign policy referenced in its Constitution. We advocate for the abandonment of military postures and doctrines that are based on nuclear deterrence, strategic stability or the need for creating conditions for nuclear disarmament. We reject any attempts to attach conditions to nuclear disarmament or to legitimize the current status quo.

We support the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East. We advocate for the maintenance of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action with Iran, which emphasized the tools of multilateral diplomacy. It is regrettable that the United States withdrew from the agreement in a unilateral manner in May 2018, which was a considerable step backwards that must be corrected as soon as possible.

We support the inalienable right of all States to develop the research, production and use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes.

We call on States to refrain from taking action that would further exacerbate the tense situation on the Korean peninsula. We condemn the imposition of unfair unilateral economic measures on the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea and interference in its internal affairs. Only through dialogue and negotiations will it be possible to reach a lasting political solution to the situation in the peninsula that takes into account the legitimate concerns of all parties involved.

We oppose the imposition of unilateral coercive measures that limit or restrict in a discriminatory manner the legitimate right of all States to develop the research, production and the use of nuclear energy for

peaceful purposes. We condemn the economic, trade and financial embargo imposed by the United States on Cuba, which is an example of such measures.

Ignoring the real threat represented by the existence of nuclear weapons could lead to the extinction of the human species. Nuclear disarmament is the highest priority in the area of disarmament today.

Mr. Pieris (Sri Lanka): My delegation aligns itself with the statement made by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.

As we sit comfortably in this room speaking of the importance of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, the world is undoubtedly experiencing the worst aggression seen in recent times. A ban on nuclear weapons is indeed important work, to which Sri Lanka is steadfastly committed. But in this artificially tranquil environment, it can be easy to feel detached and to be lulled into a sense of complacency with regard to the actual human suffering that those abominable weapons cause. It is important to listen to survivors' accounts of the agony endured.

It would appear that we are literally the one generation that has the power to destroy the past, the present and the future — the power to bring time to an end for us, human beings. As someone said, we are in a world of nuclear giants and ethical infants. We know more about war than about peace, more about killing than about living. We have grasped the mystery of the atom and rejected the Sermon on the Mount. That is surely the tragedy of our times. It was young Ms. Matsumoto, who hid in an underground bomb shelter, who narrated the immense human suffering in Nagasaki. I urge members to consider their emotions if Ms. Matsumoto were their child. She recalled of that day,

“As we sat there, shell-shocked and confused, heavily injured burn victims came stumbling into the bomb shelter en masse. Their skin had peeled off their bodies and faces and hung limply down on the ground, in ribbons. Their hair was burnt down to a few measly centimetres from the scalp. Many of the victims collapsed as soon as they reached the bomb shelter entrance, forming a massive pile of contorted bodies”.

Do we need to say more? The consequences of a detonation of the stockpile we have today would be just beyond our imagination.

It is disappointing and frustrating that we have witnessed a recent backsliding in progress. The NPT Review Conferences have ended with no consensus. Nuclear threats have become more palpable and frequent. We appear to have a bad propensity to flirt with suicidal tendencies. Some commentators muse about the introduction and political acceptability of the use of tactical nuclear weapons, and some nuclear-armed States have reneged on multilateral agreements aimed at reducing the threat of nuclear-weapon use. Furthermore, a continued lack of progress on disarmament may eventually lead other States to test and develop nuclear weapons.

In keeping with its long-standing commitment to nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament, Sri Lanka was also pleased to accede to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons during the high-level week of the General Assembly at its seventy-eighth session. The convening, from 21 to 23 June 2022, of the first Meeting of States Parties, which adopted a declaration and an action plan, was a welcome measure. Sri Lanka looks forward to participating in the second Meeting of States Parties, to be held in November.

Sri Lanka is taking real, substantive steps. We urge others to join us in taking unified action to work towards the elimination of nuclear weapons. At the same time, it must be reiterated that non-proliferation policies should not infringe upon each State's right to access, produce, import, export and use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes.

In conclusion, I would like to echo the words of the late Sri Lankan diplomat, Mr. Jayantha Dhanapala, former Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Chair of the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference, who dedicated his life to the cause of disarmament. He said:

“In addressing such weapons, the Committee should explore ways of bringing disarmament to the world, or of bringing the world to disarmament, but disarmament must be done. As members of this Committee, ask not for whom the Peace Bell tolls. It tolls for you.”

Ms. Gorely (Australia): As this is the first time that Australia takes the floor in the First Committee since the attacks on Israel by Hamas, I would like to underline

Australia's unequivocal condemnation of those attacks. We call for those attacks to stop and for the immediate and unconditional release of all those taken hostage. We recognize Israel's right to defend itself. Our thoughts are with those killed or injured and all others affected, including Israeli and Palestinian citizens. As fighting continues, we call on all parties to protect civilian lives, observe international humanitarian law and respect human rights.

Australia has an enduring commitment to a world without nuclear weapons. We will continue to work with others to strengthen the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the global nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament regime, of which it is the cornerstone. But geopolitical competition is complicating progress. The Indo-Pacific region is home to an unprecedented military build-up, yet transparency and strategic reassurance are lacking. The global trend in the reduction of nuclear weapon stockpiles is at risk of reversing.

Australia welcomed the statement by the five permanent members of the Security Council, in which they endorsed the principle that a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought. Shockingly, soon thereafter Russia embarked on an illegal and immoral invasion, casting aside its security assurance to Ukraine, threatening to use nuclear weapons and suspending its implementation of the New START Treaty. Those actions highlight the danger that nuclear weapons pose to us all and the urgent need for progress on their elimination. We call on Russia to end its war in Ukraine and cease its threats and actions that take us further away from a world free of nuclear weapons. More broadly, the world expects all the nuclear-weapon States to deliver on their statement and their obligations under the NPT through concrete steps towards nuclear disarmament. As a great Power, China's substantive engagement in arms control processes will be required in shaping the new era of arms control and strategic stability for which we all hope.

Australia's approach to nuclear disarmament is both practical and realistic, underpinned by an acute awareness of the catastrophic humanitarian consequences posed by any use of nuclear weapons. We must overcome the stalemate in the Conference on Disarmament and commence negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty, which is a critical gap in our disarmament architecture. Pending the finalization of a fissile material cut-off treaty, Australia calls on

States with nuclear weapons that have not yet done so to declare and uphold a moratorium on the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons.

The entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) is a vital step on the path to nuclear disarmament. We renew our call on all remaining annex 2 States to ratify the CTBT without delay. We urge Russia not to take any steps towards revoking its ratification. We endorse the statement by the Executive Secretary of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization that ratification is in the interests of all humankind.

As a country that has experienced the consequences of nuclear testing — consequences borne disproportionately by our First Nations peoples — Australia supports a greater focus on nuclear legacy issues in our own region and beyond. While not a substitute for disarmament, nuclear risk-reduction initiatives make a genuine contribution to security. We have been encouraged by the growing focus on risk reduction and conflict prevention and look forward to continuing those efforts.

The principle and practice of transparency are indispensable for nuclear disarmament. Australia welcomed the constructive discussions at the working group on further strengthening the NPT review process, including those on improved transparency and accountability. We will keep working to build on those discussions, including with our partners in the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative.

Australia condemns the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's ongoing development of its illegal and destabilising nuclear and ballistic missile programmes. We urge the Democratic People's Republic of Korea not to resume nuclear testing and to comply fully with the relevant Security Council resolutions. We remain deeply concerned by Iran's failure to resolve outstanding NPT safeguards issues in a full and technically credible manner, and we strongly support the professional efforts of the International Atomic Energy Agency as it seeks to implement NPT safeguards in Iran.

The security environment in which we now find ourselves demands that we make progress on all those issues. The Committee can rely on Australia to play a constructive role in that.

Mr. Muhamad (Malaysia): Malaysia aligns itself with the statements delivered by the representative of Indonesia, on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, and the representative of Viet Nam, on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

In 1945, the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki made an indelible impact on the global consciousness, laying bare the death and suffering that are inextricably linked to the very existence of those horrific instruments of war and destruction. Today the international community's efforts to advance peace, security and sustainable development remain blighted by the unacceptable risks posed by nuclear weapons. No matter how sophisticated or measured they may appear, all military policies, concepts and doctrines featuring nuclear weapons rest fundamentally on the real threat that such weapons can and will be used, thereby inflicting catastrophic humanitarian and environmental consequences.

As States parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) navigate uncharted waters in the wake of the two successive failures of NPT Review Conferences to adopt a substantive outcome, arms control mechanisms are unravelling and the modernization of nuclear weapons and delivery systems proceeds apace. Furthermore, the maintenance and expansion of nuclear-sharing arrangements predicated on notions of deterrence is a cause for great concern. If the integrity and credibility of the NPT are to be preserved, the grand bargain underpinning the Treaty cannot remain a distant dream, one that is constantly deferred by the considerations of strategic stability that hold sway over the nuclear-weapon States.

The first session of the Preparatory Committee for the eleventh NPT Review Conference, which was held recently in Vienna, reflects the deep trust deficit that States parties must overcome. It is imperative that all NPT obligations and commitments, particularly those of the nuclear-weapon States relating to article VI of the treaty, be fully implemented. Pursuant to action 21 of the 2010 action plan, the nuclear-weapon States should adopt a standard reporting form.

My delegation reaffirms that the total elimination of nuclear weapons is the only absolute guarantee against their use or threat of use. This realization underpins our unwavering support for the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). Malaysia currently co-chairs, with South Africa, the informal

working group on the universalization of the TPNW and looks forward to the second Meeting of States Parties to the TPNW later this year. We warmly welcome the signature of the Treaty by the Bahamas, and Sri Lanka's accession to it, on 19 September 2023.

The promise and steady advance of the TPNW should provide additional impetus to moving forward on other key elements of the global nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation architecture. This applies to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), which we urge the remaining States listed in annex 2 to the Treaty to sign and ratify it without delay, so as to enable its entry into force. The CTBT has established a powerful norm against nuclear testing and is making an invaluable contribution to international peace and security for the good of humankind.

In our own region, Malaysia will work with fellow States members of ASEAN in continuously engaging all the nuclear-weapon States and intensifying the efforts of all parties to resolve all outstanding issues in accordance with the objectives and principles of the Southeast Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone.

The advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on the *Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons*, rendered in July 1996, remains of contemporary relevance. Malaysia welcomes support and co-sponsorship for our annual draft resolution of the First Committee on follow-up to this seminal opinion (A/C.1/78/L.21).

With regard to the Korean peninsula, the resumption of dialogue among concerned parties is key to achieving its complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization. Malaysia also reiterates the importance of the restoration and continued implementation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action.

Let us work with indomitable resolve to consign nuclear weapons to the annals of history and realize the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons for present and future generations.

Mr. Margaritis (Greece): Greece fully aligns itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union and would like to contribute a few remarks in our national capacity.

For us, universal adherence to, and entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty is a key priority. We are concerned at some recent developments that threaten the integrity of the Treaty.

My country remains a strong supporter of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and considers it to be the cornerstone of the global disarmament architecture. We regret that the first meeting of the Preparatory Committee for the eleventh NPT Review Conference was concluded without adopting a factual report.

We also recognize the vital importance of an immediate commencement of negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty within the Conference on Disarmament. At this point, allow us to highlight the long-standing demand for enlarging the Conference, after three decades of complete stalemate.

Incidents involving nuclear safety or security recognize no boundaries and, if they occur, can have far-reaching implications at the regional and even global levels. It is well understood that a nuclear accident anywhere is a nuclear accident everywhere. The repercussions of the nuclear tragedies of 1986 and 2011 continue to affect our common conscience. That is why it is crucial for every country to prioritize and adhere to the highest standards of safety and security in the nuclear industry.

Greece highly values the International Atomic Energy Agency's technical expertise, independence and impartiality in fulfilling its mandate. Moreover, my country is dedicated to maintaining a strong partnership and cooperation with the Agency. Its multilateral, impartial, qualified and effective system of safeguards remains one of the core components of the NPT and a fundamental guarantee for nuclear security, ensuring the exclusively peaceful nature of nuclear activities.

Countries that utilize nuclear energy, or aspire to do so in future, should stick to the highest standards of transparency with respect to possible implications for the transboundary natural environment. For Greece, the issue of achieving a strong nuclear-safety culture is of paramount importance, regardless of the fact that nuclear power has never been an option for our national energy grid. In this regard, the Agency has a vital role in strengthening States' capacity to ensure that the development and use of nuclear energy take place under the most rigorous safety conditions, for the protection of people and the environment, especially in regions with dynamic seismic and earthquake activity.

To conclude, nuclear security remains the responsibility of States. In this regard, we encourage all States, at the regional and international level, to

implement the Agency's safeguards, use its advisory services and host peer reviews and associated follow-up missions and, lastly, publish the results of such missions, in the interest of transparency and global nuclear safety.

Ms. Petit (France) (*spoke in French*): France associates itself with the statement made by the observer of the European Union and wishes to present the following additional remarks.

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is the cornerstone of the non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament regimes. We welcome the discussions at the first meeting of the Preparatory Committee for the new NPT Review Conference. The draft final report submitted by the Chair provided a useful basis for continuing our work. We deplore the fact that the report was blocked and could not be adopted, and the fact that it cannot even be cited as a reference.

We offer our full support to the Chair-designate of the next Preparatory Committee. We also note that interesting proposals have been put forward to increase transparency on the three pillars of the Treaty and to strengthen the review cycle. These may help to inform our work, taking into account the very uneven level of efforts already made in terms of transparency, for example, in doctrines and arsenals.

Within the framework of the NPT and its article VI, France has taken considerable and unrivalled unilateral disarmament measures. These measures include, inter alia, the irreversible dismantling of fissile-material production facilities for nuclear weapons, the complete dismantling of our surface-to-surface nuclear component, the halving of the number of nuclear weapons, the reduction by a third of the oceanic and airborne components, and the irreversible dismantling of the test site in the Pacific.

France's commitment to nuclear disarmament is based on a progressive approach, rooted in strategic reality and founded on the principle of undiminished security for all. We intend to pursue a concrete and ambitious nuclear disarmament agenda along the following lines: preservation of the primacy and centrality of the NPT, entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, continued work on nuclear disarmament verification, further collective reflection on strategic risk reduction, and the opening of negotiations on a fissile material cut-off

treaty at the Conference on Disarmament on the basis of the Shannon mandate. Pending such negotiations, France calls on all States concerned to declare and implement a moratorium on the production of these fissile materials.

France condemns in the strongest possible terms Russia's violation of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, in breach of its international commitments, including the Budapest Memorandum. The use of irresponsible nuclear rhetoric, as well as the attacks on energy infrastructure, including nuclear energy infrastructure, in the war in Ukraine, are very worrisome. We deplore Russia's suspension of its participation in the New START Treaty. We also express our concern at Russia's announcement that it is prepared to withdraw its ratification of the CTBT. We reiterate the importance we attach to this Treaty, which Russia has signed and ratified, and to Russia's compliance with its moratorium on nuclear testing.

The January 2022 Joint Statement of the Leaders of the Five Nuclear-Weapon States on Preventing Nuclear War and Avoiding Arms Races stresses that nuclear weapons, as long as they exist, must only be used for defensive purposes, deterrence and the prevention of war, and not as tools of intimidation or coercion. For its part, France assumes its responsibility. In contrast, France condemns Russia's misuse of the principles of nuclear deterrence, which we are witnessing today in the context of Russian aggression in Ukraine, to serve a strategy of intimidation and coercion.

With regard to proliferation crises, France condemns Iran's continuing violations of its commitments under the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. We condemn the recent withdrawal of an experienced International Atomic Energy Agency inspector and reiterate our support for the Director General of the Agency. It is essential that Iran implements fully and without delay the commitments it made to the Agency on 4 March 2023.

France also remains concerned at North Korea's pursuit of proliferation activities. Accordingly, all our actions and priorities will guide the position we adopt again this year with regard to the draft resolutions submitted in this cluster and in all disarmament forums.

The full version of this statement will be available on the e-deleGATE website.

Mr. Escaig (Sweden): Sweden associates itself with the statement made by the observer of the

European Union. The following remarks are made in our national capacity.

We join others in expressing concern about the deteriorating security environment marked by the lack of trust, the erosion of arms-control regimes and the continued expansion of nuclear arsenals without transparency. An already serious situation has been compounded by Russia's illegal, unjustified and unprovoked war of aggression against Ukraine, which Sweden condemns in the strongest possible terms.

Russia's repeated threats to use nuclear weapons are deeply irresponsible and completely unacceptable. Russia's announcements of its readiness to conduct a nuclear test as well as plans to deploy nuclear weapons in Belarus are part of a pattern of aggressive behaviour that aims to undermine the international rules-based order. Sweden once again calls on Russia to withdraw all its armed forces, military equipment and personnel from Ukraine, including from the illegally seized Zaporizhzhya Nuclear Power Plant.

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) remains the cornerstone of the global disarmament and non-proliferation regime. Sweden will continue to promote the full implementation of the NPT, an obligation of all States parties to the Treaty, while fully acknowledging the special responsibility that the nuclear-weapon States bear stemming from article VI.

Through the Stockholm Initiative for Nuclear Disarmament, Sweden, together with a cross-regional group of partners, has underlined the necessity of further progress in disarmament. Convinced that disarmament commitments from earlier NPT Review Conferences remain valid, the Initiative has put forward proposals to mobilize political support and achieve concrete progress on disarmament. As also highlighted by the Stockholm Initiative, steps to reduce the risk of nuclear-weapons use are urgent. While they are no substitute for disarmament, risk-reduction measures can enable disarmament progress by reducing tensions, promoting confidence-building and trust, and paving the way for additional practical steps.

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) plays an indispensable role in preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons, promoting nuclear and radiation safety, and facilitating the use of peaceful nuclear technology. It is essential that the Agency receives the necessary political and financial support.

I would like to emphasize the need for the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) as well as the establishment of a treaty banning the production of fissile material for use in nuclear weapons or other explosive nuclear devices. Sweden urges the remaining States listed in annex 2 of the CTBT to ratify the Treaty, and it underlines the need to maintain the existing moratoriums on nuclear-test explosions until the Treaty's entry into force. We join others in expressing deep concern at the recent announcement by Russia of a possible reconsideration of its ratification of the CTBT.

Nuclear disarmament verification is a success story of recent years, and we strongly encourage more States to engage in this area. Sweden is actively engaged in the International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification and the Quad Nuclear Verification Partnership, both of which continue to deliver concrete insights into future verification requirements. We also participated in the Group of Governmental Experts to further consider nuclear disarmament verification issues, whose work and concluding report (see A/78/120) we welcome.

Sweden calls on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to fulfil its international commitments, undertake the complete, verifiable and irreversible disarmament of its nuclear-weapons and ballistic-missile programme, and immediately cease all related activities, in accordance with Security Council resolutions. Sweden remains committed to supporting a peaceful dialogue on the Korean peninsula.

Sweden reiterates its call on Iran to reverse its escalating nuclear trajectory and to provide the IAEA with the verification authority it needs to confirm the correctness and completeness of Iran's declarations.

In the deteriorating security environment in which we find ourselves today, we must be ambitious but realistic. Reducing the risk of nuclear-weapons use is urgent and of utmost importance. Transparency, accountability and other confidence-building measures can decrease tensions, increase trust and dispel misconceptions, thus improving the conditions for disarmament and complementing disarmament efforts.

Mr. In Den Bosch (Kingdom of the Netherlands): As a complement to the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union, I would like to make the following remarks in my national capacity.

Trust has always been a scarce commodity in arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation. That is why, for years, "trust but verify" has been our unofficial

motto. Regrettably, trust is low due to the current security environment, and that harms our work. A mere call to rebuild trust would be too simple. Nonetheless, we have to make use of the mechanisms that are already in place, or rather are still in place. The New START Treaty, for instance, has proven that verification supports and enhances meaningful arms control and non-proliferation. For that reason, we re-emphasize our call on Russia to immediately return to compliance with New START and fulfil its obligations under the agreement. In the same light, we strongly deplore Russia's announced intention to revoke its ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

For the Netherlands, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is and will remain the cornerstone of the global nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament regime, as well as a fundamental part of our collective peace and security architecture. It is regrettable that the working group on further strengthening the review process of the Treaty could not agree on concrete recommendations for the first meeting of the Preparatory Committee for the 2026 NPT Review Conference.

Nevertheless, we fully subscribe to the recommendations set forth in the Chair's working paper, and we welcome the broad support they garnered. These recommendations provide an excellent basis to continue discussions on improving the effectiveness, efficiency, coordination and continuity of the review process at the next Preparatory Committee session. We would like to work towards consensus on, *inter alia*, improving the structure of the Main Committees and subsidiary bodies; nominating the Chair's Bureau at an early date; and encouraging the use of a standard reporting format and introducing a common reporting framework within the review cycle.

The Netherlands is of the opinion that all nuclear-weapon States and non-nuclear-weapon States need to continue to report regularly on their undertakings. For the nuclear-weapon States, this includes reporting on nuclear doctrines and arsenals. The standard reporting form proposed by the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative for both nuclear- and non-nuclear-weapon States is an indispensable tool in this regard.

In addition to reporting, to rebuild a climate of trust, we need increased transparency on nuclear arsenals, doctrines and risk-reduction measures. Enhancing transparency measures will not only help to establish a common ground for dialogue and negotiation, but also enables all of us, nuclear-weapon States in particular,

to demonstrate our implementation of the NPT and especially the full implementation of article VI.

Moreover, increased transparency and accountability contributes to building effective verification regimes, which is essential for achieving and maintaining a world free of nuclear weapons. We also recall the special responsibility of the five nuclear-weapon States to live up to their obligations under the Treaty. So far, four out of five have declared a moratorium on the production of fissile material. Now, it is a matter of the fifth and last doing the same. Moreover, we call upon all States concerned to further implement transparency and confidence-building measures to create an environment conducive to starting negotiations on a treaty banning the production of fissile material.

To further strengthen our work from a substantive perspective, we believe the international community must reconsider how it deals with international organizations, civil society and outside experts. In this same vein, we have to ensure that disarmament and non-proliferation processes structurally include gender and youth perspectives.

The New Agenda for Peace injects a renewed sense of urgency into our work on nuclear disarmament, nuclear-risk reduction and non-proliferation. In the light of this, I would like to underline the importance of revitalizing the Conference on Disarmament to preserve its unique role as a multilateral negotiating forum on disarmament. We look forward to continuing this discussion in Geneva to ensure that the Conference can deliver again not only on what the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament expected us to do, but also on what present circumstances require us to do.

Mr. Himmler (Germany): Germany aligns itself with the statement made by the observer of the European Union. The following remarks are made in our national capacity.

Since last year's session of the First Committee, the deterioration of international security and the overt downward trend in arms control and disarmament have continued. The New START Treaty has been suspended by Russia. In the context of its illegal war of aggression against Ukraine, Russia has announced the deployment of nuclear weapons to Belarus. China is steadily expanding its nuclear arsenal, while relentlessly refusing transparency measures or arms-control negotiations. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea continues to develop its nuclear-weapon and ballistic-missile programme. Recent reports of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) show the worrisome state of Iran's nuclear programme. In August, the first meeting of the Preparatory Committee for

the next Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) ended without a consensus report.

Do we, under these circumstances, still believe that progress on disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation can be achieved, and that we should continue to strive for a safer world without nuclear weapons? The answer is yes. As my Foreign Minister said in New York two weeks ago:

“I am convinced that in this world, speaking up for nuclear arms control actually matters more than ever”,

because we all share the goal of a safer world without nuclear weapons, even if our perspectives on how to reach this goal might differ.

Concrete and practical steps towards nuclear disarmament and to strengthen the NPT are needed if we want to get closer to this goal. Concrete steps are needed to show that article VI matters. And it is in Russia's hands to make a big step very rapidly by reversing its decision to suspend implementation of the New START Treaty and to respond to the repeated offer by the United States for renewed dialogue on arms control. Let us not forget that as one of the most important nuclear-arms-control treaties, the New START Treaty has significantly cut down the world's two biggest nuclear arsenals. We also call on China, whose arsenals are steadily growing, to open up to dialogue with the United States about its nuclear programme and their joint responsibility for strategic stability.

It is also overdue that the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) enters into force. All States that have not yet signed and ratified this treaty should do so. Our world cannot afford to see the ban on nuclear testing wither. At the same time, we call on Russia to not reconsider its CTBT ratification, which would be a step in the wrong direction.

With respect to the long-term damages caused by nuclear testing, Germany will foster engagement on the provision of assistance to victims and environmental remediation. Starting negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty is overdue, but it would greatly contribute to strengthening nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. Meanwhile, we call on China to finally declare a moratorium on the production of fissile material.

We know that we will not make progress on these disarmament goals from today to tomorrow. However, in the current security environment marked by Russia's illegal war of aggression and high nuclear tensions,

reducing nuclear risks is a matter of urgency, not as a substitute for disarmament, but as an urgent measure to establish a minimum level of predictability, transparency and therefore security.

Nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation are closely intertwined and greatly affect one another. That is why preventing States from obtaining a nuclear weapon deserves just as much attention as nuclear arms control does. Germany will remain committed to resolving the ongoing proliferation crises and in particular to continuing to push for a diplomatic solution to the great concerns caused by Iran's nuclear programme and to helping to find ways to embark on a path towards complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization in North Korea.

Let me finish on a positive note despite these challenging times. The New START ceilings still hold. The United States has offered strategic arms-control talks without any preconditions to Russia and China. The working group on further strengthening the review process of the NPT showed that States parties are in favour of making progress on strengthening the Treaty in an interactive and transparent manner.

Germany remains engaged in various initiatives that aim to mitigate polarization and enhance cooperation to advance disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation, in particular the Stockholm Initiative and the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative. We remain convinced that progress can be achieved. But it can be achieved only if all nuclear-weapon States, including Russia and China, take credible steps. Then we all can make this world safer again.

Mr. Clutterbuck (New Zealand): Much has been said already in this session of the First Committee about the perilous state of the international security environment. New Zealand's conviction is that halting and reversing this slide requires urgent and meaningful progress on nuclear disarmament, which is a goal to which we remain fully committed.

So long as nuclear weapons continue to exist, there is a risk they will be used, with the catastrophic humanitarian consequences that that would entail. This reality underpins New Zealand's approach on nuclear disarmament in the First Committee and is reflected in the resolutions that we support or co-sponsor.

As a member of the New Agenda Coalition (NAC), which this year commemorated its twenty-fifth anniversary, New Zealand recommends our draft resolution on accelerating the implementation of

nuclear disarmament commitments (A/C.1/78/L.33). Against escalating tensions and obstacles to nuclear disarmament, our draft resolution remains unapologetic in its demands for existing obligations and commitments to be implemented. The NAC draft resolution lays out a way forward in response to global concern about rising nuclear rhetoric and risk of nuclear weapon use and about the trajectory of nuclear arsenals and nuclear doctrines.

New Zealand is deeply disappointed at the lack of an outcome document at successive Review Conferences of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), and meagre progress made this year by the working group on further strengthening the review process of the NPT and meetings of the Preparatory Committee.

Alongside our NAC partners, we will continue to push for the implementation of the nuclear disarmament obligations and related commitments under the NPT, including transparency, accountability and reporting on progress. We know that, for some, the NAC draft resolution is seen as confronting. But acknowledging this gap in implementation — and accelerating our efforts to address it — is a more productive way forward than moving the goal posts to make it easier to score.

New Zealand is a core sponsor, along with Mexico and Australia, of the draft resolution on the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Comprehensive Nuclear-Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) (A/C.1/78/L.45), and we encourage all States members to support this text. It is more important than ever that the CTBT retains full support, and that all signatories comply with their obligations, including not to defeat the CTBT's objective and purpose prior to its entry into force. We again urge those who have yet to ratify this treaty to do so without delay.

New Zealand is a core sponsor of the draft resolution on the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) (A/C.1/78/L.24), which remains a bright spot on an otherwise dark horizon. We commend to all the TPNW and the work of its States parties to implement the Vienna Action Plan. We urge all States to keep an open mind with respect to the TPNW and our common global objective, namely, the total elimination of nuclear weapons. Supporting this draft resolution would underline this shared goal. We also encourage all States to attend the second Meeting of States Parties to the TPNW in New York in late November.

New Zealand is party to the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty — the Treaty of Rarotonga — which is an important symbol of our region's long-standing

opposition to nuclear weapons. This year we are pleased to lead, with the support of Brazil, Indonesia and South Africa, the draft resolution on a Nuclear-weapon-free southern hemisphere and adjacent areas (A/C.1/78/L.50). This draft resolution reaffirms the critical role performed by nuclear-weapon-free zones in strengthening the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime and the value of extending these areas. We urge all countries to support it.

New Zealand is also pleased to co-sponsor a new draft resolution from Kiribati and Kazakhstan, entitled “Addressing the legacy of nuclear weapons: providing victim assistance and environmental remediation to Member States affected by the use or testing of nuclear weapons” (A/C.1/78/L.52). Decades of nuclear-weapon tests in the Pacific have cast a long and destructive shadow over our collective home, the impacts of which are still evident today. We commend the draft resolution’s authors for consulting broadly and are pleased that a wide range of States have engaged on the draft text. It is an important reminder of the seriousness and difficult legacy of harm left by nuclear-testing regimes and the need to address them. We count on wide support.

Finally, New Zealand will again co-sponsor the draft resolutions on the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons (A/C.1/78/L.23) and on the Ethical imperatives for a nuclear-weapon-free world (A/C.1/78/L.32). As the global security environment deteriorates, these draft resolutions remain important contributions to our work on nuclear disarmament, reminding us so clearly why we must continue to push for progress — not in spite of the global challenges we face, but because of them.

The Chair: The right of reply has been requested. I would like to remind members that statements in the exercise of the right of reply are limited to five minutes for the first intervention and three minutes for the second.

Mr. Song Kim (Democratic People’s Republic of Korea): My delegation is compelled to take the floor in response to the statements made by the observer of the European Union (EU) and the representative of Australia. We categorically reject the illogical allegations levelled against my country.

If the European Union observer wants the EU to achieve its goal of becoming an independent pole in the international arena, it is a prerequisite for it to correctly judge and address the issues of international relations on the basis of the universal principles of impartiality and objectivity. However, to our deep regret, the EU is alarmingly failing to match its words to action. As of now,

the EU is obsessed with an anachronistic Cold War and bloc diplomacy mentality and is blindly dancing to the tune of the United States, which is indulging in hegemony and high-handedness. It is absolutely untenable and intolerable that the EU is seeking peace and security at the cost of the security interests of other countries.

As for the so-called Security Council resolutions referred to by the EU, it is advisable to have a closer look at the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter, of which respect for sovereignty, non-interference in internal affairs and refraining from the threat or use of force against a sovereign State are integral parts. The purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter are the cornerstone governing all activities of the major organs of the Organization, but the so-called Security Council resolutions against the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea run counter to the key principles of the Charter. Accordingly, we categorically reject such resolutions, which seriously encroach upon the Democratic People’s Republic’s sovereignty and right to development and existence.

Given the fact that the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea and United States are technically at war, demanding that the so-called Security Council resolutions be observed is tantamount to imposing the surrender of the right to self-defence to the United States, a belligerent party. If the EU is truly interested in delivering peace and security on the Korean peninsula and in the rest of our region, it must desist from intentionally ignoring the ever-worsening security environment caused by the reckless and bellicose military provocations of the United States, such as aggressively stepped-up and scaled-up joint military exercises and the frequent deployment of nuclear strategic assets.

Yesterday again, the United States aircraft carrier *USS Ronald Reagan* made a port of call on the Korean peninsula in the wake of a maritime interdiction drill off the peninsula in collaboration with the Japan and Republic of Korea, targeting the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea. The United States continues to deploy various nuclear strategic assets on the Korean peninsula, where the danger of the outbreak of a nuclear war looms large, in a blatant military provocation irrevocably driving the situation towards catastrophe. What country in the world would stand idly by before the precarious situation where its sovereignty and security interests are seriously jeopardized?

The EU must come back to its senses, take a macroscopic view of the stark reality and make a proper

assessment and judgment of the situation. Otherwise, it is most likely to be stigmatized as a mere servant of the United States.

Australia is not entitled to talk about non-proliferation. As the saying goes, the burglar is sounding the burglar alarm. The Australia-United Kingdom partnership with the United States must stop once and for all, as it seriously undermines the international non-proliferation regime.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea is bolstering its self-defensive deterrence measures as a justified exercise of its sovereign right to safeguard its own dignity and security and to control and manage the ever-worsening situation of the Korean peninsula in a stable way, in the face of the threat posed by the outrageous hostility of the United States.

Mr. Vorontsov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): There have been accusations from a number of Western countries against Russia having to do with the threat of nuclear weapons. I want to say that these accusations are no more than another element of a brazen anti-Russian campaign. Russia's doctrines on nuclear deterrence have been laid out with the utmost clarity. They do not allow for any broader interpretation and are purely defensive in nature. Official statements by Russia on this matter have remained within these doctrines, and they are fully aligned with our country's international commitments.

At present, the international security situation has descended to a perilous level. Because of the West's culpability, the European space has seen the emergence of a grave crisis involving nuclear Powers. Western capitals have repeatedly engaged in aggressive rhetoric. Against that backdrop, Russian officials were compelled several times to address the mounting strategic risks. The statements we made were obviously meant for the United States and NATO, whose dangerous expansion, creating an anti-Russian beachhead in Ukraine, posed a threat to core Russian interests. They had mentioned the task of dealing Russia a so-called strategic defeat and kept engaging in ever deeper confrontation. The West is therefore balancing the situation on the brink of direct military confrontation.

Thus there has been generated a risk of an armed conflict of nuclear Powers that all nuclear-five countries undertook to prevent in the joint declaration of 3 January 2022. It seems that the United States and its allies have become completely confident in their ability in all circumstances to control the escalation and project force on Russia without any detriment to themselves. That is a most dangerous delusion, which is fraught with

catastrophic consequences. That is the essence of our signals and warnings to the West. It is not the language of threats; rather it is the classic logic of deterrence.

Given the strident criticisms of Western countries about Russia's decision to suspend the New START Treaty. We note the following. This decision is the logical outcome of a profound degradation of Russian-American relations, for which the United States is to blame. This includes a serious exacerbation of military and political strife. The highest level of animosity of Washington, together with its policy to fan the flames of and maliciously escalate the conflict in Ukraine and directly undermine our national security, has radically changed the circumstances that prevailed when the New START Treaty was originally signed. The United States has undermined fundamental principles and understandings enshrined in the Treaty, without which it would not have been entered into. Specifically, it has ignored the principle of indivisible security, the parties' dedication to build relations based on trust and cooperation, and the recognition of the linkage between offensive strategic arms and missile defence systems. Moreover, Washington has long been substantially violating the central quantitative limitations under the Treaty, illegitimately excluding from the count over 100 units of strategic offensive weapons.

Furthermore, Washington has provided the Kyiv regime with military, technical and intelligence assistance. In doing so, the Americans have, with Kyiv's hands, brazenly and provocatively targeted Russian strategic objects under the New START Treaty. At a time when the NATO nuclear bloc, which is consolidated on an anti-Russian basis, has announced that it was going to deal us a so-called strategic defeat, we are compelled to seriously consider the factor of the joint nuclear arsenals of the United States, Great Britain and France, which could bring their arsenals to bear on Russia. The decision to suspend the New START Treaty was therefore a compelled, legitimate and fully justified step taken by our country.

Ms. Maayan (Israel): The representative of Indonesia, speaking on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, dedicated a major part of her statement to the distorted notion that Israel is a threat to the region. One must only look back a few days to the atrocities of the terrorist organization Hamas to gain some clarity as to the real threat to the region.

The representative of Jordan, speaking on behalf of the Group of Arab States, expressed his concern about the so-called danger that Israel poses to the Middle East,

but failed to mention Iran's continuous violations of their safeguards obligations or its avoidance of providing adequate answers to the International Atomic Energy Agency on the investigations related to undeclared nuclear-material activities performed in undeclared nuclear sites.

These are dark times — the darkest of days — when we dig the graves of the 1,300 mothers and fathers and sons and daughters of Israel murdered by evil and hate, when we dig the graves of those burnt alive in their homes, when we dig the graves of those who died bravely defending others, when we dig the smallest of graves, for the babies of the Kfar Aza kibbutz. These are dark days indeed.

In these dark days, we will remember those who stand by our side in the fight against evil. And let me tell you one thing, Mr. Chair: Hamas is evil. It is the embodiment of evil and a proxy for the Islamic Republic of Iran. Anyone who still requires proof is beyond hope and certainly beyond reason.

(spoke in French)

From fanaticism to barbarism, there is only one step.

(spoke in English)

That step has been taken by Hamas, costing the lives of 1,300 innocent civilians — men, women and children — murdered for who they are, not for anything they have ever done.

We are sitting in this conference room today discussing the issues of nuclear disarmament. But if these most recent days have taught us anything, it is that all one needs to destroy everything that is good in this world is hate. Hate will not prevail because of the people of Israel who stand in its way. We will prevail. We will win.

Mr. Al Ashkar (Syrian Arab Republic) *(spoke in Arabic)*: I asked for the floor to exercise my country's right of reply to what the observer of the European Union said in his statement about the cooperation of Syria with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

My delegation would like to clarify that the item under consideration by the IAEA Board of Governors on implementing the safeguards agreement in Syria represents one of the negative aspects of the exploitation of certain State members of this Agency to serve their own political agendas. In this context, my delegation stresses that Syria has cooperated with the Agency with full transparency and has exercised maximum flexibility. Syria spared no effort to settle all pending matters, including agreeing on a plan of action in that regard. The annual reports of the IAEA prove that Syria has cooperated in implementing

the safeguards agreement, and we have fully met our commitments in line with this agreement. Syria has also met all periodic inspection requests in a timely manner.

Turning to what was said in the observer's statement about the additional protocol, my delegation would like to note that it is clear that there is a mix-up between what is a legally binding commitment for a State member in relation to the safeguards agreement and what are voluntary procedures in terms of the additional protocol. That mix-up, which is intended to obscure matters, is legally baseless. It is merely an attempt at political manipulation.

Mr. Sun Yiliang (China) *(spoke in Chinese)*: In response to the statements made by the representatives of Germany and other countries, in which they have groundlessly speculated on China's nuclear policy, I would like to make the following statement.

China controls its nuclear power at the minimum level required for the defence of our security. We have not and will not participate in a nuclear arms race with any country. We abide by the policy that we will not be the first to use nuclear weapons at any time or under any circumstance, and we clearly and unconditionally promise not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against any non-nuclear-weapon country or any nuclear-weapon-free zone.

China is improving its strategic capacity because that is required for the modernization of our national defence and military under the new circumstances. It is also required to address the issue of aging armaments and preserve the reliability, safety and security of our nuclear arsenal. In fact, other nuclear-weapon States also need to upgrade in this manner, and they are doing just that.

China's limited nuclear capacity is entirely defensive. It is not targeting anybody. As long as no country uses nuclear weapons against China, there is no need to view our nuclear power as a threat, and there is no need to feel any threat from us.

As for transparency in relation to our nuclear power, we believe that transparency surrounds our policy and intentions on the one hand, and capacity and quantity on the other. Transparency in terms of policy and intentions is more pragmatic. In this sense, China's nuclear policy is highly transparent. China is the only country of the permanent five to openly commit to non-first-use and to not using or threatening to use nuclear weapons against any non-nuclear-weapon State

or nuclear-weapon-free zone. If I may ask, who else is able to be this transparent?

The truth is that no nuclear-weapon State can be absolutely transparent. Individual nuclear-weapon States may claim to be transparent as to the quantity of the nuclear weapons they possess, but they stubbornly persist in the first-use policy. And they keep upgrading the role nuclear weapons play in their national security doctrines. This level of transparency is essentially a threat. It does not improve mutual trust, nor does it make anybody feel safer. China believes that nuclear transparency must be applied with full consideration of the differences in scale of the nuclear capabilities, nuclear doctrine and policy, and strategic security environments of nuclear-weapon States, based on their different national realities, and on a voluntary basis.

Mr. Ghorbanpour Najafabadi (Islamic Republic of Iran): I have requested the floor to exercise my country's right of reply to respond to the baseless and unfounded allegations levelled against the Islamic Republic of Iran by the representative of the Israeli regime. My delegation categorically rejects all of these allegations. Indeed, that representative made accusations that totally fit with her regime's own practice and behaviour in seven decades of occupation of Palestinian territory, including committing all four of the core international law crimes against Palestinians: crimes against humanity, war crimes, genocide and ethnic cleansing, and aggression against its Palestinian neighbours and beyond.

Over the past seven decades, millions of Palestinians have been displaced all around the world, their homes and farms demolished, and tens of thousands of them killed. Along with Palestinian territory, a part of Lebanon and Syrian Golan remain under an ongoing occupation by this regime.

The case for atrocity crimes of this regime in Palestine remains pending before the International Criminal Court and has been for years. "Targeted killing", which is a term this regime invented for its State terrorism and assassinations within occupied Palestinian territory and on foreign soil, continues as this regime's official policy. Unfortunately, this regime does not adhere to any international legal regime, be it United Nations resolutions, United Nations human

rights instruments or conventions on disarmament and non-proliferation. It is not surprising that those who demand that Iran unilaterally implement the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) wilfully ignore all wrongdoing by this regime, including its failure to comply with non-proliferation agreements, refusal to submit its military nuclear programme to International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards, and ongoing criminal and destabilizing activities in the region and against Palestinians.

Independent countries rightfully hold this regime accountable for its destabilizing role in the region and for its savage atrocities. Ironically, this regime, which has a long history of clandestine and covert operations, accuses Iran of violating the JCPOA, the same accord whose destruction they helped facilitate with the previous United States Administration. In recent decades, the Israeli regime has not spared any efforts to prevent the conclusion of a comprehensive agreement and its implementation, whether by assassination of Iranian nuclear scientists or by such subversive activities against our critical infrastructure as terrorist acts against the Natanz nuclear facility or attempts to sabotage diplomatic efforts.

I have already mentioned what the Prime Minister said at the general debate of the seventy-eighth session of General Assembly with regard to threatening Iran with nuclear annihilation (see A/78/PV.10). We do not expect this regime to abide by international norms and regulations. However, we take very seriously what that unstable person said. We too believe that words have meaning, as they said before (see A/C.1/78/PV.9), and we take them seriously.

The Chair: We have exhausted the time available to us this afternoon. I sincerely thank our interpreters for providing us with the extra time. As Chair of the First Committee, I really appreciate that.

The next meeting of the Committee will be held on Monday, 16 October at 10 a.m. in this conference room. In accordance with the programme of work, we will continue the thematic discussion on the nuclear weapons cluster and hear a briefing by the Chair of the Group of Governmental Experts to further consider nuclear disarmament verification issues.

The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.