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New York

Chair: Mr. Jadoon..... (Pakistan)

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

General exchange of views (continued)

The Chair: I would urge those delegations that have not yet done so to inscribe themselves on the list as soon as possible. To maximize the time available to us during this segment, I propose that we maintain the practice of using a rolling list of speakers, which is currently open to all delegations wishing to take the floor.

I would also like to remind all delegations that have already inscribed their names on the list to keep in mind that a rolling list implies that they should be prepared to intervene at any time, possibly even sooner than they had originally planned to speak. I would also like to remind delegations that we will follow the established format for the length of statements: 13 minutes for delegations speaking on behalf of groups and 8 minutes for delegations making statements in their national capacity.

Mr. Syrymbet (Kazakhstan): I most warmly felicitate the Chair of the 2024 session of the Disarmament Commission, as well as the elected members of the Bureau and the Chairs of the Working Groups, Mr. Akaki Dvali of Georgia and Ms. Julia Rodrigues Acosta of El Salvador, for assuming their important responsibilities. I wish them all every success in their undertakings. As the outgoing Chair of the Commission at its 2023 session, I assure them of Kazakhstan's wholehearted support and sincerely thank all delegations for their unfailing cooperation since the start of the preparations for this session.

I also express appreciation to High Representative for Disarmament Affairs Mrs. Izumi Nakamitsu and the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA), as well as the secretariat, particularly Mr. Alexander Lomaia and his colleagues, for their continued assistance to all Member States and, especially, to the chairmanship of the 2023 session.

Today we are witnessing unprecedented divides, and hence look to the Commission to mobilize innovative confidence-building measures and safeguards. Global nuclear disarmament remains at the top of Kazakhstan's foreign policy agenda. In February, we marked the thirtieth anniversary of our accession to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). Our own national record in implementing the NPT provisions remains impeccable.

On the other hand, we are concerned over the growing rivalry and rhetoric of the nuclear Powers. In that context, we cannot help but recall the statement of the nuclear-weapon States at their meeting in January 2022, which said, "a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought" — wisdom we must never forget. Let us not forget that we already have time-tested provisions in all key nuclear disarmament instruments: the NPT, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and, more recently, the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), which together form a solid disarmament architecture and machinery.

Considering the current disarmament landscape, which is fraught with complex geopolitical tensions, as Chair of the second session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2026 Review Conference of the

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Parties to the NPT Kazakhstan will seek a balanced approach, with adequate consideration of the Treaty and all three main pillars. Our discussions with States parties have indicated some major tasks that lie before the international community, which I summarize as follows.

There is a growing, compelling demand for most vigorously implementing article VI of the NPT. The successive failure to reach consensus at the 2015 and 2022 NPT Review Conferences should not be grounds for despondency. There are many elements of great value in the two respective outcome documents that can bring States to work together. It is also imperative to lower the heightened nuclear rhetoric, the alert status of nuclear arms and their postures in security and military doctrines. Simultaneously, negative security assurances must be given by nuclear-weapon States to all States that do not possess any nuclear military capabilities.

The expansion of nuclear-weapon-free zones (NWFZs) assures greater security for all. Thus, five years ago Kazakhstan initiated a project, in cooperation with UNODA, to consolidate the efforts of States constituting denuclearized zones. Representatives of NWFZs and other key stakeholders met together in our capital city in 2019 to discuss strengthened measures of collaboration. Their recommendations led to the adoption of a declaration and the creation of a special website on NWFZs within the larger UNODA web portal. Shortly, a second workshop on nuclear-weapon-free zones will be held in late August in Astana.

The denuclearization of the Korean peninsula through preventive diplomacy is another matter of urgent priority.

It is equally critical to strengthen the International Atomic Energy Agency's verification and safeguard measures and simultaneously expand its scope for peaceful uses of nuclear energy in every sphere of human activity.

We continue to shine light on the CTBT as we call on the annex 2 States to ratify the Treaty for its earliest entry into force. It is increasingly recognized that, in the meantime, moratoria on testing can never be the ultimate solution.

Implementing Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) strengthens international security as we sharpen attention on eliminating qualitatively new threats of cybercrime and prevent nuclear weapons from falling into the hands of terrorists.

Given that no substantial progress has occurred in nuclear disarmament, the TPNW is significant in pursuing the full implementation of article VI of the NPT. Like others, we reiterate the collective conviction that the TPNW and the NPT do not contradict each other but are mutually compatible and reinforcing.

As President-designate of the third Meeting of States Parties to the TPNW, Kazakhstan is actively working towards fully implementing and universalizing the Treaty. Kazakhstan will also apply all efforts to seek convergence between the TPNW and the NPT. Furthermore, we have initiated the establishment of an international trust fund to enable assistance and remediation to people and territories affected by nuclear testing.

We recall the substantial reduction of nuclear arsenals of the United States and Russia in the second half of the twentieth century, accompanied by several constructive steps to end discord in many parts of the world. However, in light of the current erosion of many international security achievements, we realize that, without rapprochement between those two leading nuclear States, we could be heading towards long-term polarizations between the leading Powers. It is important to adapt the international disarmament process to new historical conditions. We need a new, viable and robust strategy for the Conference on Disarmament to break the stalemate and proceed to address urgent arms control and security issues.

On the other hand, the rapid modernization and production of nuclear arsenals make them only more lethal when powered by new technologies, and especially artificial intelligence. The exponential emergence particularly of artificial intelligence (AI), while benefiting humankind, must be guided by ethical considerations to prevent global disarray and danger. While welcoming the historic General resolution 78/311, on AI, the urgent need to adopt a global compact will provide the needed regulatory and mitigation policies. To that end, we must collaborate with the United Nations, the International Telecommunication Union, UNESCO, the Human Rights Council and all stakeholders. Furthermore, we are well aware that when linked to nuclear weapons, AI becomes an existential threat because of miscalculations or false triggers. Hence, nuclear weapons must always be controlled and directed by humans, and not AI.

Disarmament calls for a whole-of-society approach involving the military industry, the private sector, the academic and scientific communities, the media and

civil society. Most of all, harnessing the power of women and youth is a blueprint for a better world and reaching 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the New Agenda for Peace.

Finally, the coronavirus disease pandemic was a sharp reminder that we have not adapted to a new biothreat landscape. For that reason, Kazakhstan advocates the creation of an international agency for biological safety. That body would strengthen the Biological Weapons Convention and global biosafety standards. The cooperation and support of delegations will be instrumental to bringing that important initiative to fruition.

To conclude, Kazakhstan joins hands with all for the Commission to reach timely and effective recommendations to avert threats to our existence.

I wish everyone a very productive 2024 session of the Disarmament Commission.

Mr. Hmoud (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Mr. Chair, on your election to preside over the Disarmament Commission this year. I would also like to congratulate the Vice-Chairs and the Chairs of the two Working Groups. I wish them every success in the work of this session, which is being held under exceptional circumstances.

I would like to affirm Jordan's aspiration to work with the Committee leadership towards achieving the goals it aspires to and to stress the importance of the role played by the Commission in disarmament efforts and the promotion of international peace and security.

Jordan's delegation aligns itself with the statements delivered on behalf of the Group of Arab States and the Non-Aligned Movement (see A/CN.10/PV.391) and would like to make the following remarks in its national capacity.

Jordan reiterates its deep concern over the continued failure to achieve real and tangible progress in the field of nuclear disarmament. We emphasize that achieving real progress in Working Group I should be among our top priorities at this session, as the current stalemate in the disarmament pillar is negatively affecting the future work, credibility and relevance of the Commission.

We stress the need to engage in a comprehensive and balanced dialogue to ensure the success of this session, especially on the item related to nuclear disarmament, with the aim of emphasizing the commitment of nuclear States to nuclear disarmament and setting a specific

timetable for implementing the related commitments, especially those that nuclear-weapon States have pledged in the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). We note that the success of this session is an urgent need in light of the current tensions in the world. The States parties to the NPT have failed to agree a final document for the second time in a row. In that regard, we stress the need to support regional and international efforts to strengthen disarmament diplomacy, while emphasizing the importance of building on regional efforts to achieve that common goal.

Jordan calls on all States Members of the United Nations to uphold the outcomes of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction at its first, second, third and fourth sessions, and to support the efforts of the countries of the region to agree on a legally binding regional instrument to address the threat of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in the region, which would enhance regional and international peace and security.

We reiterate our call on Israel to join the Conference without any preconditions. It must also join the NPT, subject its nuclear facilities and activities to the comprehensive safeguards system of the International Atomic Energy Agency and stop its officials from threatening to use nuclear weapons against the defenceless Palestinian people. In that context, Jordan calls on Working Group I, on nuclear disarmament, to support the efforts of the countries of the region and urges them to engage effectively and to participate in the work of the Conference in order to reach a zone free of nuclear weapons and various weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East.

With regard to emerging technologies in the context of international security, Jordan stresses the need to conduct a comprehensive assessment of the challenges and risks associated with those technologies, especially artificial intelligence and lethal autonomous weapons. We also stress the need to promote international cooperation in those areas and the exchange of expertise, and to develop international legal frameworks for the use of such technologies in armament.

In conclusion, I reiterate Jordan's full support for the work of the Commission and look forward to working closely with all countries and the Chair at this session.

Ms. Low (Singapore): My delegation congratulates you, Sir, on your election as Chair of the United Nations Disarmament Commission (UNDC). We also congratulate Mr. Akaki Dvali of Georgia and Ms. Julia Rodrigues Acosta of El Salvador on their election as Chairs of the Working Group on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and the Working Group on emerging technologies in the context of international security, respectively. Singapore assures them of our full support and cooperation in that process.

Singapore aligns itself with the statements delivered by the representative of Indonesia, on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, and by the representative of Laos, on behalf of Association of Southeast Asian Nations (see A/CN.10/PV.391). We would like to add the following comments in our national capacity.

We reaffirm the role of the UNDC as the sole specialized, deliberative body to consider and make recommendations on disarmament issues. We were particularly encouraged that Working Group II of the last UNDC cycle achieved consensus on recommendations to promote the practical implementation of transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities with the goal of preventing an arms race in outer space, and we urge all Member States to implement those recommendations. We welcome the convening of the new three-year cycle of the UNDC as an opportunity for Member States to continue inclusive and constructive dialogue and propose concrete recommendations for disarmament. An inclusive, open and multilateral approach is essential to addressing the issues of nuclear disarmament and the impact of emerging technologies on international security, particularly given the transnational nature of those issues.

Against the backdrop of a divided and deteriorating international security environment, Singapore reiterates our full commitment to the international nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime, towards the ultimate goal of a world free of nuclear weapons. We should use this opportunity for free-flowing dialogue to seek convergence on how to address current and future challenges. I would like to make three suggestions on how we can take concrete steps forward.

First, we must uphold and strengthen our commitment to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), which is the cornerstone of the international nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation

regime. We reiterate our disappointment at the failure of the tenth Review Conference of the Parties to the NPT in 2022 to adopt a final document — the second consecutive time the NPT Review Conference has failed to do so. We also regret the lack of substantive progress at the first session of the Preparatory Committee for the eleventh NPT Review Conference in 2023. As the Secretary-General noted at a Security Council briefing on 18 March, “geopolitical tensions and mistrust have escalated the risk of nuclear warfare to its highest point in decades” (S/PV.9579, p.2).

To protect our hard-won gains on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation and avoid a nuclear catastrophe, we must overcome the divisions and mistrust between nuclear-weapon States and non-nuclear-weapon States, as well as among nuclear weapon States. We therefore urge all Member States to show strong political will and make a collective effort to fulfil their commitments to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation within a specified and reasonable timeframe. We hope that discussions at the second NPT Preparatory Committee from July to August will bear fruit in that regard. We also call on countries outside the ambit of the NPT to join or rejoin the NPT so as to strengthen the international nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime.

Secondly, we must redouble our efforts towards the early entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). We regret the decision of the Russian Federation to revoke its ratification of the CTBT, and we emphasize that States should refrain from actions that go against the objective and purpose of the Treaty pending the CTBT’s entry into force. However, we are encouraged by the two Member States that ratified the CTBT in 2023 and urge all countries, particularly the remaining annex 2 States, to ratify it as soon as possible.

Thirdly, nuclear weapon-free zones remain useful building blocks towards a world free of nuclear weapons. Singapore will continue to work closely with our Association of Southeast Asian Nations partners and the nuclear-weapon States to resolve outstanding issues in accordance with the objectives and principles of the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone (SEANWFZ) Treaty, and for the nuclear-weapon States’ signing and ratification of the protocol to the SEANWFZ Treaty without reservations. Singapore is also pleased to announce that we will be participating in a peer review on the implementation of Security

Council resolution 1540 (2004) with Palau and the Philippines in May to improve the implementation of that crucial non-proliferation resolution in the region.

Singapore also welcomes the UNDC's decision to discuss recommendations on common understandings related to emerging technologies in the context of international security, under its Working Group II. There has been an increasing interest at the United Nations on frontier issues like emerging technologies. The inclusive nature of the UNDC makes it an appropriate platform for Member States to reach common understandings relating to emerging technologies and their impact on international peace and security. Even though Singapore is a small country, we have been active in discussions on emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence. For example, Singapore co-hosted, with the Netherlands and the Republic of Korea, the Responsible Artificial Intelligence in the Military Domain Regional Consultations for Asia in February 2024. We hope that the briefings and exchange of views in Working Group II will contribute to confidence-building among Member States. That said, we emphasize the need to avoid duplicating existing discussions and processes in other disarmament forums in New York or Geneva.

In conclusion, Singapore looks forward to engaging constructively with other Member States over the next few weeks to address the critical issues of nuclear weapons and emerging technologies in the context of international security.

Mr. Kiboino (Kenya): Kenya aligns itself with the statements delivered by the representatives of Angola and Indonesia on behalf of the Group of African States and the Non-Aligned Movement, respectively (see A/CN.10/PV.391).

I congratulate you, Sir, on assuming the Chair of the 2024 substantive session of the United Nations Disarmament Commission and assure you of the support of Kenya's delegation.

Kenya reaffirms its long-standing commitment to nuclear disarmament, nuclear non-proliferation and the ultimate realization of a world free of nuclear weapons. We welcome the two agenda items — “Recommendations for achieving the objective of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons” and “Recommendations on common understandings related to emerging technologies in the context of international

security” — that will be focus of the 2024 substantive session of the Disarmament Commission. They are critically pertinent.

It has been about seven decades since the General Assembly adopted, by consensus, its first resolution calling for

“the elimination from national armaments of atomic weapons and of all other major weapons adaptable to mass destruction” (*General Assembly resolution 1 (I), para. 5 (c)*).

Many instruments, including landmark conventions and treaties, resolutions and reports, have been agreed upon since then.

Regrettably, a world free of national armaments of atomic weapons and all other major weapons adaptable to mass destruction remains an aspiration whose achievement is elusive and increasingly doubtful. The world is still grappling with the proliferation of not only weapons of mass destruction but also conventional weapons, including small arms and light weapons. We are witnessing heightening multipolar rivalries and tensions marked by a surge in military expenditures, a prevalence of dangerous military manoeuvres and, most significantly, a rise in the threat of the use of nuclear weapons.

The very existence of nuclear weapons, coupled with enduring threats of their deployment, constitutes an existential threat to international peace and security, especially given the looming dangers of possible miscalculation among nuclear-armed States and of weapons adaptable to mass destruction falling into the hands of non-State actors, including terrorist groups.

Against that backdrop, Kenya urges all Member States to demonstrate flexibility and to cooperate within the context of the relevant multilateral frameworks with a view to overcoming political and security-related barriers in the advancement of disarmament objectives. We must therefore all support the Disarmament Commission its crucial role as the specialized deliberative body within the disarmament machinery to foster action through concrete recommendations to the General Assembly.

The absolute guarantee against the use of nuclear weapons lies in their complete elimination. We strongly urge nuclear-weapon States to fully implement their disarmament obligations and commitments under the applicable international treaties. Kenya also urges

all nuclear-weapon States and the nuclear umbrella States to adopt security doctrines that exclude nuclear weapons as part of their strategic calculus.

As a developing country, Kenya underscores the importance of continued respect for the inalienable right of all States to engage in research and development of nuclear technology for peaceful purposes, in line with article IV of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. The utilization of emerging technologies for peaceful purposes holds promise for advancing global priorities and must be optimally harnessed for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. However, those technologies also present risks to international peace and security. The proliferation of advanced weaponry systems and technological abilities, including artificial intelligence and unmanned aerial vehicles, for instance, has heightened the complexity of security dynamics, necessitating robust mechanisms for transparency, confidence-building and risk mitigation.

Addressing the dual nature of emerging technologies requires a comprehensive approach that balances innovation with responsible governance and oversight. In that regard, international cooperation and dialogue are essential for fostering common understanding, promoting norms and developing regulatory frameworks that uphold ethical standards and ensure the peaceful application of technology. Additionally, investments in capacity-building and awareness-raising initiatives can empower Member States to harness the benefits of emerging technologies while mitigating associated risks. Ultimately, by fostering a culture of responsible innovation and collaboration, the international community can harness the transformative potential of emerging technologies to advance shared goals while safeguarding global peace and security.

In conclusion, I reassure you, Sir, of my delegation's constructive engagement during this session of the Disarmament Commission. We hope that our deliberations will culminate in a timely and consensual adoption of the draft reports with action-oriented recommendations on the two topics.

Mrs. González López (El Salvador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I extend my delegation's warm congratulations on your election, Sir, to chair the work of this new cycle of the United Nations Disarmament Commission.

El Salvador attaches great importance to the work of the Commission and is pleased to begin the first year of deliberations in a new three-year cycle. The

Disarmament Commission plays a crucial role in the discussion of relevant aspects of general and complete disarmament, non-proliferation, arms control and the generation of recommendations that allow us to address current challenges to international security.

My country has consistently advocated in various forums for nuclear disarmament, the effective control of other weapons of mass destruction through compliance with international commitments, the strengthening of existing non-proliferation regimes and the control of arms and ammunition as essential means to build and maintain lasting peace and strengthen international security.

We regret that the Commission was unable in the previous cycle to generate recommendations to achieve the objective of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, which is a debt we have owed for decades. This situation, coupled with the lack of agreements in other forums, such as the Review Conferences of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), weakens the international disarmament and non-proliferation architecture and undermines the credibility of the United Nations to address the complex challenges of our era. That requires a deep reflection on the existing mechanisms and whether they are still adequate to our needs or whether it is necessary to promote changes.

Despite those challenges, El Salvador welcomes the new NPT review cycle as an opportunity to redirect the course of the Treaty, although the prospects are not encouraging. We believe that, without balanced and substantive progress in the three pillars of the Treaty together, we will continue to observe imbalances in its implementation and gaps in complementarity, which will inevitably lead to failures and setbacks at the upcoming Review Conferences.

As we have said on other occasions, the Disarmament Commission is an inclusive body in which the States Members of the United Nations have the opportunity to exchange ideas with those that are not States parties to the NPT. That is a unique opportunity to discuss the actions that bring us closer to the goal of nuclear disarmament and to address the challenges that separate us from that founding objective of the United Nations.

My country observes with concern how the increase in current geopolitical tensions translates into increased risks related to the use of nuclear weapons, as acknowledged by the authority of the United Nations

itself, representing the highest risks since the end of the Cold War. El Salvador is firmly convinced that the only path towards a world free of nuclear weapons is the complete, verifiable, irreversible, non-discriminatory and transparent elimination of those weapons, which is an ethical and moral imperative. In that regard, we call on States that are not yet party to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) to sign and/or ratify the treaty, which complements the Non-Proliferation Treaty and strengthens the international framework for nuclear disarmament. El Salvador will continue to work resolutely towards the goal of universalizing the TPNW.

Regarding the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones, we believe that measure to be a central step in nuclear disarmament and we encourage its implementation as soon as possible in geographic areas where they do not exist, in compliance with commitments previously undertaken. Regarding nuclear risk reduction measures, for El Salvador such actions are a transitional step towards achieving the objectives of nuclear disarmament and should not be considered as a substitute for the unequivocal commitment of the States possessing those weapons to eliminate them, nor should they legitimize their possession and ownership.

Finally, we reaffirm our interest in promoting alternative doctrines to nuclear deterrence, which offers a false sense of security and increases the risks of horizontal proliferation, which in turn hinders progress towards nuclear disarmament. We recognize the close link between disarmament and development and reiterate that the resources allocated to improving nuclear arsenals divert resources from social and economic development, deepening the gaps between countries.

Regarding the work of Working Group II, on common understandings related to emerging technologies in the context of international security, my country welcomes the success achieved last year in the adoption of recommendations to promote the practical application of transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities. That augurs well for the future work of the Group. El Salvador has the high honour of leading the Group's work. We are grateful for the confidence entrusted in us by the Member States, and my country is committed to the Group's work with a view to generating recommendations that incorporate the visions of all of them.

El Salvador also recognizes that rapid technological advances require constant comprehensive development, especially with regard to emerging technologies. However, it is recognized that the breadth of the topic could make it difficult to formulate substantive recommendations. Nevertheless, in a conciliatory spirit, it is hoped that this first year of sessions will promote discussion and lay the groundwork for the formulation of effective recommendations.

In that regard, El Salvador wishes to contribute some ideas that have been discussed in other spaces of the Organization that address emerging technologies. It is essential to adopt a technologically neutral approach towards those technologies, particularly those with dual use, highlighting both their benefits and their risks in the context of international security. Furthermore, the delimitation of the scope of the work of Working Group II on emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence and its applications or uses, will allow for focus and depth in the discussions.

El Salvador reiterates its commitment to the work of the Disarmament Commission and hopes that our deliberations will gather substantive elements to advance the objective of disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, as well as to formulate effective recommendations on emerging technologies in the context of international security.

Mrs. Lora-Santos (Philippines): At the outset, our delegation congratulates you, Sir, on your election to preside over the 2024 substantive session of the United Nations Disarmament Commission (UNDC).

The Philippines aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative Laos, on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and the statement delivered by the representative Indonesia, on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (see A/CN.10/PV.391).

On the agenda item on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, I wish to highlight the following.

The UNDC remains unique as the only platform where all United Nations Member States are represented to make recommendations for achieving the objectives of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. The result of the last cycle of the UNDC under Working Group I was disheartening, but our delegation remains hopeful that so long as Member States maintain genuine engagement, the UNDC's outcome can positively contribute to the second

session of the Preparatory Committee of the eleventh Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the third Meeting of States Parties to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. We take note of the robust discussions in the last cycle of the UNDC and, although we did not have an agreed outcome document for Working Group I, we believe that many issues threshed out in the last cycle will remain useful to our discussions in this cycle.

We share our grave concerns over the nuclear rhetoric and the continued modernization and refinement of nuclear weapon capabilities. The lowering of the threshold of nuclear weapons sharpens the urgency of efforts to reduce the risk of nuclear use. We emphasize, however, that nuclear risk reduction is only a pathway towards and not an alternative to complete nuclear disarmament. Any agreement on risk reduction must recognize that risks emanate from the very existence of nuclear weapons itself, and that any effort to reduce such risks must never legitimize the continued existence of nuclear weapons or serve as a substitute for tangible progress in fulfilling nuclear disarmament obligations.

We reiterate the urgent need for the transparency and accountability of nuclear-weapon States with respect to their disarmament obligations under the NPT through benchmarks; concrete, measurable and timebound actions on nuclear disarmament with established deadlines; and reporting their implementation of those obligations to the NPT Review Conference. That must be done in a structured manner that allows non-nuclear-weapon States to engage constructively on their reports.

We join ASEAN in our continued support for the full and effective implementation of other relevant efforts, including Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) and the Secretary-General's Agenda for Disarmament, to advance nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation in a concrete, holistic and integrated manner. In that regard, we are pleased to share that the Philippines and Singapore, along with Palau, will undertake this year a peer review exercise on the implementation of resolution 1540 (2004) on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of its adoption.

On emerging technologies, the development and application of emerging technologies for peaceful purposes can bring significant benefits, including supporting multilaterally agreed priorities like the Sustainable Development Goals. Those technologies

can enhance peacekeeping operations, improve early warning systems, facilitate humanitarian assistance and aid in conflict resolution and post-conflict peacebuilding.

To deploy emerging technologies in a manner that safeguards international peace and security, it is crucial to ensure that those technologies are used in ways that respect the core principles of the United Nations. That involves promoting responsible research and innovation, adhering to international law and addressing governance frameworks effectively.

Despite their benefits, emerging technologies can have a disruptive impact by increasing the risks of miscalculation, misunderstandings and misperceptions. That underscores the importance of comprehensive governance frameworks, multi-stakeholder dialogues involving experts from various sectors, and evidence-based analysis to mitigate those risks.

The Philippines is concerned about possible duplications in intergovernmental discussions on specific technologies related to international security within the United Nations. In that regard, we need to ensure that we establish clear mandates for each discussion forum in the relevant United Nations processes so that we can avoid overlapping discussion and help prevent redundancies in our efforts.

We see the value of letting the UNDC take a comprehensive approach to emerging technologies in the context of international security by addressing technologies that have not yet been discussed in dedicated intergovernmental processes. We also welcome proposals and ideas on possible synergies between different technologies, while ensuring a holistic understanding of their implications for international peace and security.

We welcome discussions on various aspects of emerging technologies in the field of international peace and security to build common understandings that facilitate collective action. However, given the time constraint, we are aware that we will need to streamline our discussion. In that regard, we trust the leadership of the UNDC Chair and the Working Group Chairs to help the Member States navigate our discussion and produce a meaningful outcome from this session.

The Philippines stands ready to work with delegations to ensure that the substantive session will be able to agree on concrete recommendations on the two items on our agenda.

Mr. Eustathiou de los Santos (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): We wish to congratulate you, Sir, and the other members of the Disarmament Commission Bureau on your election. We wish you every success and assure you that you can count on the full support of our delegation in the work we will carry out over the next three weeks.

We congratulate Georgia and El Salvador on their elections as Chairs of Working Groups I and II.

Uruguay, as a non-nuclear-weapon State, is committed to strengthening the disarmament and non-proliferation regime and supports multilateralism in its action in favour of universal and complete disarmament. Therefore, at a time when the threat of the use of nuclear weapons is more present than ever, we must remember that the use and threat of use of such weapons of mass destruction constitute a crime against humanity and a serious violation of international law, humanitarian law and the Charter of the United Nations.

My delegation expresses its deep concern about the increase in global and regional tensions, the updating of nuclear arsenals and the proliferation of new and destabilizing weapons, strategic and conventional alike. Within the framework of our co-chairmanship of the informal working group on universalization of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, we call on all States to join that multilateral instrument, which would allow us to move decisively towards the peace and international security that we so long for. Likewise, we urge the countries party to annex 2 of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty to ratify that agreement without delay as a measure to promote confidence and transparency in a challenging context.

Uruguay promotes the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones and welcomes its membership in the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean, which preceded the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and is the first nuclear-weapon-free zone in a densely populated territory. Recognizing the importance of implementing the three fundamental pillars of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons — nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and the peaceful use of nuclear energy — Uruguay reaffirms the importance of the peaceful use of nuclear energy and wishes to express its support for the independent work of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

The use and development of emerging technologies in the context of international security offer not only potential benefits but also great challenges, such as the increased risk of miscalculation, the use of 3D printers in the proliferation of weapons and ammunition or the growth of autonomous weapon systems without human control, as well as the malicious use of information technologies.

Autonomous weapons pose serious challenges from a humanitarian, legal, security and ethical perspective. Without significant human control, such systems will pose a risk of escalating conflicts and undermine the responsibility and accountability necessary in the use of force. As new weapons technologies continue to be developed and used in conflicts, the need to regulate those new means of warfare, taking into account the provisions of international law and international humanitarian law, becomes unavoidable.

The malicious use of information and communications technologies is an urgent problem that requires greater cooperation among States and between the public and private sectors to protect the integrity, functioning and availability of our national cybersecurity systems.

In order to address those real and potential threats, it is essential that we continue to develop mutual assistance measures, taking into account the different capacities of each country to deal with such challenges. In that regard, and as we have repeatedly expressed at the national and regional levels, we need to promote cooperation in all its forms, in addition to the exchange of good practices and information, which are in themselves confidence-building measures.

Let us remember that not all countries have equal access to the benefits of technology; it is therefore a priority that capacity-building address the needs of all States, particularly developing countries, with a view to closing the digital and gender gap. In that framework, the use of artificial intelligence must be considered with a view to enhancing human capabilities, aimed at improving people's quality of life and adding value to human activities. The solutions provided by that tool must serve the general interest, guaranteeing inclusion and equity. Uruguay supports the use of artificial intelligence in a transparent manner, revealing the algorithms and data used, as well as the tests and validations carried out.

Finally, we must also champion ethics in the use of artificial intelligence, as well as the development of systems that respect and take into account human rights within the framework of the life cycle of artificial intelligence.

In conclusion, we welcome the approval of the programme of work and the definition of the topics for the thematic groups. The commitment of the delegations at this session will be important to ensuring that the work of the Commission results in recommendations that contribute to international peace and security.

Mr. Shatil (Bangladesh): My delegation joins others in congratulating you, Sir, on your assumption of the Chair of the 2024 substantive session of the United Nations Disarmament Commission (UNDC). We also congratulate the Vice-Chairs and the Chairs of the Working Groups on their elections. My delegation assures you and the Bureau of our full support.

Bangladesh aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (see A/CN.10/PV.391).

Allow me to share our national position.

Bangladesh stands as a steadfast advocate for multilateralism in the quest for general and complete disarmament. In today's complex and rapidly evolving security landscape, the need for effective disarmament measures is more pressing than ever. We recognize that there is no alternative to multilateral cooperation to address those challenges. It is our shared goal to bolster the effectiveness of the United Nations disarmament machineries.

Bangladesh continues to express deep concerns regarding the precarious state of global disarmament and the international security architecture. We reiterate the urgent need to revitalize the entire disarmament machinery, including the UNDC, to foster a stable and secure world.

My delegation attaches high importance to the work of the UNDC as the sole deliberative body with universal membership in building consensus on crucial issues related to general and complete disarmament, including nuclear disarmament. While we recognize the progress achieved in adopting transparency and confidence-building measures for outer space activities, we must express our deep disappointment over the Commission's inability to reach a consensus on the critical matters of nuclear disarmament and

non-proliferation in the previous cycle. It is our hope that, collectively, we will be able to reach consensus on the work of both Working Groups during this cycle of the UNDC. To achieve that, we urge all Member States, particularly nuclear-weapon States, to demonstrate genuine political will and flexibility.

The General Assembly envisioned a world free of nuclear weapons in its very first resolution (resolution 1 (I)). Sadly, the promise of disarmament remains elusive. Present and future generations continue to live under the constant fear of nuclear catastrophe. We must therefore be united against the perpetual holding of nuclear weapons by a handful of States, in total disregard of the safety and security of humankind.

Bangladesh's commitment to general and complete disarmament is total and unwavering. It is our constitutional obligation and remains a fundamental tenet of our peace-centric foreign policy objectives. Guided by that principle, we firmly believe that the ultimate guarantee of international peace and security lies in the total elimination of nuclear weapons. We reaffirm our unwavering commitment to the objectives of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, of which we are a proud early State party. We welcome the entry into force of the Treaty and its two Meetings of State Parties. We would like to see, as a matter of priority, its full implementation by all, including the nuclear-weapon States.

Bangladesh considers the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) to be the cornerstone of the global nuclear non-proliferation regime and the fundamental foundation for the pursuit of nuclear disarmament. We call upon all nuclear-weapon States to fulfil their commitments made at previous Review Conferences of the Parties to the Treaty without delay. We reiterate our call on the nuclear-weapon States to demonstrate strong resolve to enable the eleventh Review Conference to produce a meaningful, tangible and sustainable outcome to further strengthen the NPT regime.

We reaffirm the inalienable right of each Member State to pursue peaceful uses of nuclear energy, in compliance with the relevant safety, safeguard and security measures. In our national context, we remain committed to further deepening our existing cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency in enhancing our capacity for such compliance.

We share our profound frustration and concerns over the prolonged state of paralysis of the Conference on Disarmament (CD) as the sole multilateral disarmament negotiating body. The protracted deadlock in the CD reflects a lack of political will among the States. The situation must be addressed carefully and urgently.

We urge Member States to intensify their efforts towards achieving the rapid entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and universal adherence thereto, particularly on the part of the nuclear-weapon States. Additionally, we call upon all Member States to commence negotiations in the CD on a fissile material cut-off treaty.

The rapidly evolving global security landscape, spurred by rapid technological advancement, underscores the need for diverse disarmament measures that go beyond conventional frameworks. Technological progress, especially in artificial intelligence, autonomous weapons systems, biotechnology and cybercapabilities, has fundamentally reshaped global security dynamics. In light of that, we welcome the adoption of the agenda item concerning the development of common understandings related to emerging technologies within the context of international security in Working Group II. It is imperative to highlight that we must be mindful to avoid duplicating efforts in other ongoing processes in which focused and evolving discussions are taking place.

Finally, we are hopeful that, under your able stewardship, Sir, this UNDC session will produce the desired outcome to advance the global disarmament and non-proliferation. We look forward to engaging constructively in the discussion.

Mr. Al-Fatlawi (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, the delegation of Iraq congratulates you, Mr. Chair, on your election to preside over the 2024 session of the United Nations Disarmament Commission. We are fully confident that your experience and diplomatic competence will contribute to achieving positive results. We offer you and the members of the Bureau our full support for the success of the work of this session.

We also congratulate the representatives of Georgia and El Salvador on their election to chair the two Working Groups at this session. We stand ready to cooperate constructively with them to ensure the success of their work.

I also extend my thanks to Ambassador Akan Rakhmetullin for his efforts at the previous session. In that context, Iraq expresses its support for the statements delivered respectively by the representative of Indonesia, on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, and the representative of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, on behalf of the Group of Arab States (see A/CN.10/PV.391).

The delegation of Iraq stresses once again the importance of the pivotal role played by the United Nations Disarmament Commission as the multilateral deliberative forum specializing in disarmament issues within the United Nations. We reiterate the need to redouble our work and show more flexibility and political will, especially in the light of the current complex security conditions in the international environment, in order to achieve recommendations that meet the concerns of all Member States regarding the items before the Commission at this session, and in a manner that contributes to establishing a world of security and peace.

The complete and total elimination of nuclear weapons is the only guarantee against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. We express deep concern about the continued existence of nuclear weapons and the possibility of their use or threat of use, and the increase in military expenditures on nuclear weapons, coupled with a continued failure to achieve tangible progress in the field of nuclear disarmament. That includes the recent failure to adopt a final document at the tenth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) for the second time in a row, which will have negative repercussions on efforts to achieve a world free of nuclear weapons.

Iraq reaffirms its commitment to and firm support for all disarmament conventions and treaties, especially those related to weapons of mass destruction, primarily nuclear weapons, and the need to take a series of concrete, collective measures to put an end to the perils that could arise from the use of those lethal weapons and to establish a safe world free of nuclear weapons in order to maintain international and regional peace and security. The most important of those steps are as follows.

First, all parties must strive to achieve the universality of treaties and agreements related to disarmament, especially those related to the elimination of weapons of mass destruction, primarily nuclear

weapons. The nuclear-weapon States must fully commit to the implementation of article VI of the NPT and implement the obligations they undertook at the 1995, 2000 and 2010 Review Conferences.

Secondly, we must take effective measures to bring the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty into force through the ratification of the eight remaining parties in annex 2 of the Treaty.

Thirdly, we need to initiate negotiations to reach a non-discriminatory international legally binding instrument on guarantees against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States parties to the NPT, in a manner that responds to the legitimate security concerns of those States and enhances mutual confidence between them and the nuclear-weapon States.

Fourthly, we must launch negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament to achieve a verifiable international treaty to ban the production of fissile materials, including stockpiles of such materials.

Fifthly, negotiations must begin in the Conference on Disarmament on a comprehensive treaty on nuclear weapons, setting a timetable for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons within the framework of an effective international verification system.

Sixthly, we need to keep the issue of nuclear disarmament at the top of the priorities of the international community until we achieve the ultimate goal of the complete and total elimination of nuclear weapons and the prevention of their use or threat of use under any circumstances and under any pretext.

The establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones is one of the important measures to support and strengthen nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. Iraq reiterates its warning against the negative consequences that could arise from continued delay in the implementation of the 1995 resolution on a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East and its impact on the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regimes. We call for expediting the creation of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East, in accordance with paragraph 14 of Security Council resolution 687 (1991) and relevant General Assembly resolutions, and as stipulated at the 1995 Review and Extension Conference and in the final document of the 2010 Review Conference (NPT/CONF.2010/50 (Vol. I)). We also stress that the 1995 Middle East resolution (NPT/CONF.1995/32 (Part I), annex) cannot

be implemented in any way unless the Israeli entity joins the NPT as a non-nuclear party and subjects all its nuclear facilities to the comprehensive safeguards system of the International Atomic Energy Agency, in accordance with Security Council resolution 487 (1981).

With regard to the second agenda item, Iraq sees the need to focus the substantive discussions of Working Group II on the use of artificial intelligence in the context of international security and military applications of artificial intelligence, including lethal autonomous weapons and the accelerating and dual nature of the uses of artificial intelligence in the context of international security, in the absence of a binding legal instrument and of a comprehensive and consensual international framework for consultation in that area. From that standpoint, Iraq stresses the need to agree recommendations that lead to setting rules to control the uses of artificial intelligence in the context of international security and to enhancing the full availability of technological exchange in emerging technologies through the transfer of expertise and the provision of technical cooperation, technical assistance and the building of relevant capacities for developing countries without interfering in the internal affairs of countries or trying to impose any kind of export restriction on developing countries.

In conclusion, we reaffirm our support and readiness to cooperate with the Disarmament Commission to come up with recommendations that meet the concerns of all Member States.

Mr. Mao (Cambodia): Allow me to extend my heartfelt congratulations to you, Mr. Chairman, on your assumption of the role of Chair of the United Nations Disarmament Commission (UNDC) at this session. My delegation pledges our full support and cooperation throughout your mandate.

Cambodia aligns itself with the statements delivered by the representative of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and by the representative of Indonesia, on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (see A/CN.10/PV.391).

Please allow me to make some additional comments in my own national capacity.

The threat of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) — nuclear, chemical, and biological — looms large over our world, posing a grave danger to international peace and security. The catastrophic consequences

witnessed in Hiroshima and Nagasaki underscore the urgent need to address that peril, especially given the recent uptick in geopolitical tensions among the nuclear-weapon States. Thus, we must take decisive action to prevent the proliferation of WMDs and to secure existing stockpiles through concerted efforts grounded in cooperation, transparency and robust multilateralism.

The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) plays a pivotal role in that endeavour. Universal adherence to the CTBT is paramount to prevent a new nuclear arms race. We urge all remaining States listed in annex 2 to join the CTBT without delay.

Moreover, diplomacy must be our primary instrument in tackling the WMD threat. Dialogue and negotiation are indispensable in resolving disputes and fostering trust among nations. Strengthening international treaties like the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the Chemical Weapons Convention is essential. Cambodia's unwavering commitment to combating and eliminating WMD is highlighted in the following statements.

First, Cambodia fully supports the Secretary-General's Agenda for Disarmament — disarmament to save humankind, disarmament to save lives, and disarmament for future generations — and his proposal for a New Agenda for Peace.

Secondly, Cambodia is a strong supporter of the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone and the ASEAN Regional Forum Inter-Sessional Meeting on Non-Proliferation and Disarmament. We continue to work with ASEAN member States to encourage nuclear-weapon States to support our efforts by signing and ratifying the Protocol to the treaty.

Thirdly, our Constitution prohibits the development, use or stockpiling of weapons of mass destruction. We have also enacted laws to combat the financing of those weapons.

Fourthly, Cambodia remains committed to the NPT, despite the recent setbacks at the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty. We look forward to the second Preparatory Committee for the eleventh Review Conference, scheduled to take place in July and August 2024 in Geneva.

Fifthly, Cambodia took a historic stride forward by ratifying the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in 2021 and welcomed the increased number of

States adhering to that crucial treaty. We look forward to the third Meeting of States Parties in early 2025.

We welcome the inclusion of emerging technologies in the agenda of Working Group II of the UNDC this year, particularly concerning international security. We look forward to engaging in substantive discussions on that critical matter with all our colleagues. My delegation takes this opportunity to announce that Cambodia will be honoured to host the fifth Review Conference of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Antipersonnel Mines and on Their Destruction in November, under the theme “Siem Reap-Angkor Summit on a Mine-Free World”. We warmly invite all States parties and non-parties to that significant event.

In conclusion, Cambodia calls upon all nations, especially the nuclear-weapon States, to intensify their commitment to participating in and supporting dialogues regarding nuclear disarmament and preventing the spread of nuclear weapons. Those efforts are crucial for achieving our shared objectives in upholding global peace and security for future generations.

Ms. Fisher (United States of America): On behalf of the United States, please allow me to congratulate you, Sir, and the other members of the Bureau on your election to lead the 2024 session of the United Nations Disarmament Commission. Please be assured that that you have the United States delegation's full support. I also thank Kazakhstan and Ambassador Rakhmetullin for their leadership of the Commission over the past year.

The United States has taken significant steps to advance nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation over the years, from making massive cuts in our nuclear arsenal — an 88 per cent reduction — to removing 61.5 metric tons of plutonium and approximately 375 metric tons of highly enriched uranium from stocks for use in nuclear weapons. We have implemented a moratorium on the production of fissile material for more than 30 years. Moreover, we have been working diligently to identify the technologies and procedures necessary to advance nuclear disarmament agreements of the future.

Despite the worsening insecurity environment, the United States seeks to work with all countries on tangible measures to reduce risk and enable progress on nuclear disarmament, consistent with our extended deterrence commitments. We call on Russia to return to full compliance with and implementation of the New START Treaty, rather than continuing with its legally

invalid purported suspension of that Treaty, and to work with the United States to develop a post-2026 New START framework. We have sought to engage and remain ready to work constructively with Russia to develop and advance a new post-START arms control framework following the expiration of the Treaty in 2026.

Unfortunately, the Russian Federation's outright rejection of dialogue with the United States reinforces the international community's concern over its destabilizing behaviour. For years, President Putin has advanced the development of dangerous new nuclear capabilities, such as radiation spewing nuclear-powered cruise missiles, all while modernizing and stockpiling old capabilities that are not regulated by arms control agreements, including theatre-range capabilities, and has taken steps to station nuclear weapons in Belarus. In the course of its brutal and unprovoked war against Ukraine, Russia's troops have recklessly attacked and seized Ukraine's Zaporizhzhya nuclear power. Furthermore, in the course of escalating its brutal war against Ukraine, Russia has recklessly engaged in nuclear sabre-rattling. Such irresponsible rhetoric raises the risks of unintended as well as deliberate escalation. For its part, the United States is ready to engage the Russian Federation without preconditions on the critical work of reducing nuclear risks.

Beyond the challenges posed by Russia, we must now also contend with a new and growing threat. The People's Republic of China's rapid and opaque nuclear build-up puts it on track to have over 1,000 operational nuclear warheads by 2030, many of which will be deployed at higher readiness levels. It is also concerning that the People's Republic of China is the only nuclear-weapon State party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) that has not declared a moratorium on the production of fissile material for use in nuclear weapons and that it stopped reporting on civil plutonium stockpiles in 2017. The People's Republic of China has declined to declare or even acknowledge the size and scope of its nuclear forces, as well as the intent behind its build-up.

The United States has reached out to the People's Republic of China with proposals for bilateral arms control and the exploration of measures to manage strategic risks. We were glad to meet on those issues in November 2023, the first such meeting in seven years. However, the People's Republic of China's resistance

to that substantive engagement and to transparency on its nuclear build-up calls into question its long-term intentions.

Fortunately, there is a clear solution to that problem. The People's Republic of China can work with the United States to improve our mutual understanding of each other's nuclear doctrine and postures and to create and implement mutually beneficial strategic and nuclear risk reduction measures. We call on both Russia and the People's Republic of China to declare the size of their nuclear arsenals, just as the United States has done on multiple occasions. Transparency in our nuclear stockpiles is important to fulfilling our commitments under the NPT. It is also essential for arms control and disarmament efforts to address all types of nuclear weapons, including deployed, non-deployed, strategic and non-strategic nuclear weapons.

In addition, we are seeing increasing nuclear escalations from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and Iran. After five years of stonewalling, Iran has failed to provide the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) with the clarifications required by its safeguards obligations, necessary to resolve outstanding questions regarding undeclared material and activities. We call on Iran to take steps to build international confidence rather than continue to undermine the IAEA's essential assurances.

Finally, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's Kim Jong Un has declared his aim to have the world's most powerful nuclear arsenal and announced plans to ramp up the development of everything from tactical nuclear weapons to intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) to unmanned underwater nuclear. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea has launched 13 ICBMs since the beginning of 2022, all of which are in violation of multiple Security Council resolutions. We urge the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to return at an early date and fully comply with the NPT and its IAEA safeguards, and to engage in dialogue and diplomacy. Our offer to meet with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea without preconditions stands.

It is important that we strengthen global security and the global security architecture. Now is the time to also address emerging security challenges. The United States is committed to promoting the responsible use of artificial intelligence (AI), as demonstrated by the Political Declaration on Responsible Military Use of Artificial Intelligence and Autonomy. That

is a landmark solutions-oriented set of 10 concrete measures to guide the responsible development and use of military applications of AI and autonomy. We also supported the adoption of emerging technologies as the focus of Working Group II, which expands the scope beyond just AI to include other emerging technologies, while putting the focus squarely on the identification of confidence-building measures that States can undertake to enhance predictability.

In all of those efforts, the United States remains committed to advancing the objectives of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), the women and peace and security agenda and gender equality. We view promoting the rights and empowerment of women and girls in all their diversity and members of all marginalized communities as both a moral and a strategic imperative. Diversity, equity and inclusion in our work makes us smarter, more creative and more innovative — something we could use more of in addressing the problems we are discussing here today.

The United States will do everything possible to promote a successful outcome to our work. We look forward to working with members as we pursue the UNDC's important mission.

Mr. Mwabukojo (United Republic of Tanzania): The United Republic of Tanzania congratulates you, Sir, and all members of the Bureau of the United Nations Disarmament Commission on your election and wishes to assure you of our full support and cooperation.

Tanzania is honoured to be part of this April gathering that seeks to collectively reflect on the global commitment on disarmament.

The United Republic of Tanzania aligns itself with the statements delivered by the representatives of Angola and Indonesia on behalf of the Group of African States and the Non-Aligned Movement, respectively (see A/CN.10/PV.391). However, I wish to complement those statements with the following remarks:

The proliferation of nuclear weapons is deemed to be the most immediate security challenge that poses an indiscriminate threat to our current and future generations, fuelling mistrust and tension among nuclear-weapon States. Tanzania, as a signatory to various treaties, reiterates its full commitment to supporting international efforts for nuclear disarmament. My delegation is convinced that the total elimination of nuclear weapons is the only option for eradicating the danger of the nuclear threat.

Without further ado, Tanzania welcomes the entry into force of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons on 22 January 2021. We recognize that a good number of countries are parties to disarmament agreements; however, we call upon all Member States, particularly the so-called nuclear-weapon States, to voluntarily fulfil their obligations. In addition, we call on all Member States to align themselves with international initiatives by entering into the following agreements: the landmark Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

My delegation supports the use of nuclear technology for peaceful purpose. Tanzania is convinced that there is justification for Member States to utilize nuclear opportunities, including nuclear energy, to facilitate human development. In that regard, Tanzania fully supports the initiatives of the International Atomic Energy Agency to promote the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, while preventing the misuse of nuclear facilities.

Tanzania and Africa in general are not among the countries that own or are in the process of acquiring nuclear weapons. However, Africa is a possible victim of nuclear war. In that regard, Tanzania is convinced that the fate of the threat of weapons of mass destruction is in the hands of nuclear-weapon States. Countries that are in the process of acquiring those weapons or that already possess nuclear weapons should be at the forefront of the nuclear disarmament campaign. My delegation is convinced that, if nuclear States end their duplicity and are determined to eliminate those weapons, the total elimination of nuclear weapons is possible. In that regard, Tanzania is calling on nuclear-weapon States to sincerely commit to a total elimination of nuclear weapons.

Regarding transparency and the arms race in outer space, Tanzania is convinced that every human being has the right to inherit or use outer space for peaceful purposes. Tanzania does not agree with actions in outer space that not only endanger the Earth and outer space, but also deny developing countries the right to access and use outer space. In that regard, my delegation calls on Member States to put in place measures that would prevent not only the arms race in outer space, but also actions to restrict access to outer space for developing countries.

It is now clear that the war in Ukraine and the war in Gaza pose a serious threat to developing countries, especially in Africa, in relation to the proliferation of sophisticated weapons. There is great concern that weapons from war-torn countries will soon fall into the hands of serious criminals, especially terrorists in Africa. In that regard, my delegation calls on Member States to develop measures that would enhance the capability to combat the trafficking of the relevant weapons into Africa.

To conclude, the United Republic of Tanzania underscores to all Member States, particularly the nuclear-weapon States, that solid political will, sincerity, trust and transparency are vital to addressing the issue of nuclear danger.

Mr. Lagorio (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Sir, and the other members of the Bureau and to wish you every success in this new session of the Disarmament Commission in 2024.

The global scenario with respect to international security presents old challenges, such as the elimination of nuclear weapons and the prevention of the arms race in space, but also new ones, such as the emergence of new technologies and the great benefits they bring to humankind. We are facing new risks that deserve a joint approach.

First of all, we reiterate our deep concern about the threat to humankind posed by the existence, use and threat of use of nuclear weapons and their humanitarian and environmental impact. We regret that in current times, nuclear rhetoric has been frequently used in a context of conflicts and tensions at the international level vis-à-vis an increase and modernization of nuclear arsenals.

We categorically state that such weapons must never be used again in any circumstances or by any actor and must be eliminated. However, in the interest of the primary objective of general and complete disarmament, we do not see the virtues of a phased approach as being incompatible with the simultaneous pursuit of the objective of the total elimination of nuclear weapons. That is why we consider it essential for the nuclear-weapon States to participate in the negotiation of measures that produce concrete results in the area of disarmament, strengthen the verification regime and consolidate the achievements made in the area of non-proliferation.

In that context, we reaffirm the importance and full validity of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) as the cornerstone of the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime. We also urge all the nuclear-weapon States signatories of the NPT to fully comply with the obligations set forth therein. In that regard, I highlight the contribution made by the 1967 Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean, which preceded the NPT, to international and regional peace and security. We also reiterate the need for the urgent entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, and we urge States that have not yet done so to sign or ratify that instrument.

Emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence and quantum computing, have the potential to contribute to the development of countries. Those technologies promise to transform resource management, increase energy efficiency and expand access to essential services. However, the same technological advances that drive development can be used for purposes contrary to international peace and security.

One of the main challenges we face is threats to cybersecurity. State and non-State actors can take advantage of vulnerabilities in critical infrastructure, financial systems and communication networks to perpetrate destructive and destabilizing cyberattacks. In that respect, it is imperative to recognize the global nature of those threats and hence to work through multilateralism and the development of capacities at the national level to strengthen the response to cyberincidents. In that regard, we would like to highlight the following confidence-building measures:

First is the regional cybersecurity technical assistance provided by the Organization of American States to establish a cybersecurity framework that protects critical infrastructure and promotes responsible practices in the use of information and communications technologies. Second is the creation of the Global Contact Points Directory, which will serve to exchange information in the face of cyberincidents, within the framework of the Open-Ended Working Group on information and communications security.

Furthermore, emerging technologies pose ethical and legal dilemmas that are difficult to resolve. The development of lethal autonomous weapons raises serious questions about the responsible use of technology and the limits of human intervention. We

need to establish solid regulatory frameworks and promote interdisciplinary dialogue to ensure that such technologies are used ethically and with respect for human rights. In that regard, I recall that my country, together with a group of other States Members of the United Nations, is promoting the negotiation of a legally binding protocol to 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 in order to regulate the issue of lethal autonomous weapons systems.

Ms. Vu (Viet Nam): At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Sir, and the other members of the Bureau on your election. Let me assure you of our full support and cooperation.

Viet Nam associates itself with the statements delivered by the representatives of Indonesia, on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, and the Lao People's Democratic Republic, on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), respectively (see A/CN.10/PV.391).

Our meeting is taking place in a complex and unstable security environment that results from the prolongation of existing armed conflicts and the persistence of disagreements and differences in many regions and forums. The continued increase in global military expenditure, the application of emerging technologies in military industries and warfare have raised concerns among the international community on new potential risks.

Against that backdrop, disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control should be placed at the centre of our deliberations in related forums and processes with a view to maintaining peace and security for all nations. In that vein, Viet Nam attaches great importance to ongoing multilateral discussions on those topics, including in the United Nations Disarmament Commission (UNDC). As 2024 is the first year of UNDC's new cycle, to facilitate our discussion we would like to make the following observations in our national capacity.

First, consensus on disarmament issues requires political will and flexibility among all United Nations Member States. In that connection, Viet Nam commends the efforts of Member States for the adoption by consensus of the UNDC recommendations to promote the practical implementation of transparency and

confidence-building measures in outer space activities with the goal of preventing an arms race in outer space. We should maintain that momentum to further pursue our endeavours towards common understandings in other disarmament matters, while ensuring the central role of UNDC as the specialized, deliberative forum on disarmament entrusted by the international community.

Secondly, top priority in disarmament efforts should be given to our common goal of complete nuclear disarmament towards a world free of nuclear weapons. In that regard, we stress the need to further strengthen the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) regime by advancing actions on all three pillars of the Treaty in a comprehensive and balanced manner, especially on the disarmament aspect. We welcome the successful convening of the first session of the Preparatory Committee of the eleventh Review Conference of the Parties to the NPT in Vienna last year and look forward to the second session this year in Geneva.

Since we have witnessed the catastrophic consequences of nuclear weapons on human health, livelihood and environment, my delegation encourages other States to sign and ratify the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) as soon as possible and looks forward to the third Meeting of State Parties to the Treaty, to be held next year. Those global efforts in nuclear disarmament will be further enhanced and supplemented by regional processes, including the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones in different regions.

Last year, the General Assembly adopted by consensus the biennial resolution (resolution 77/12) on the Treaty on the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone (SEANWFZ). That demonstrated the unanimous support of all United Nations Member States for ASEAN's commitment to preserving that region as a nuclear-weapon-free zone and free of all other weapons of mass destruction. Viet Nam takes this opportunity to welcome any individual nuclear-weapon State willing to sign and ratify the Protocol to the SEANWFZ Treaty without reservations.

In our discussions on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation at both the global and the regional levels, we should strive for a balance among the three issues of disarmament, non-proliferation and the peaceful use of nuclear energy. When serving as a member of the Board of Governors of the International Atomic Energy Agency for the term 2021-2023, Viet

Nam and other members of the Board worked hard to promote the application of nuclear technology for peaceful purposes, the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, and nuclear safety and security.

Thirdly, welcome the inclusion of the topic “Emerging technologies in the context of international security” in the Commission’s programme of work. We share the view that new technologies present both unprecedented opportunities and complex challenges. My delegation supports multilateral discussions to build common understandings on that important matter, thereby further enhancing dialogue, transparency among States and thus effectively addressing challenges and risks posed by those technologies. We are convinced that the steps we take to address the challenges and threats of emerging technologies in the context of international security should not restrict the access of Member States, especially developing countries, to the benefits of such technologies for the effective implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

To conclude, my delegation stands ready to engage actively and constructively with all Member States in the deliberations of the Commission this year and throughout this cycle.

Mr. Edtmayer (Austria): Let me congratulate you, Sir, as well as the other Bureau members and the Chairs of the Working Groups, on your elections. You can count on our full support. We would also like to thank the Permanent Representative of Kazakhstan for his chairmanship and important efforts in steering us towards an agreement on Working Group II.

Austria aligns itself with the statement made on behalf of the European Union (see A/CN.10/PV.391) and would like to make the following remarks in its national capacity.

We meet at a time of unprecedented crisis, challenging the very underpinnings of our international cooperation — a time of rising geopolitical tensions and mistrust; a time of fuelling arms races, from nuclear weapons to new technologies; a time when many of the multilateral institutions established to foster peace and security are not delivering on their mandates. These times should not be an excuse for obstruction or unilateralism, but instead must underline the necessity for multilateralism.

Nuclear disarmament is not a distant goal in the future, but an immediate priority that needs to be addressed by us, the international community as

a whole. An urgent change of paradigm is needed in a world where nuclear weapons continue to be an existential threat to us all. The risks and catastrophic humanitarian and environmental impact are unacceptable. The nuclear taboo has been dramatically challenged by Russia’s implicit but unmistakable nuclear threats in its illegal war of aggression against its neighbour, Ukraine. We categorically condemn that clear violation of international law and the Charter of the United Nations by a permanent member of the Security Council and a depositary of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).

We, together with the clear global majority of States, have done our part to advance long overdue progress on nuclear disarmament, as required by the NPT, when we adopted the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. On the basis of facts and evidence on the catastrophic humanitarian consequences and inherent risks of nuclear weapons, we put the legitimate security of all humans at the centre of our deliberations, rather than relying on the precarious and unproven theory of nuclear deterrence. We simply cannot know if nuclear deterrence works in any situation, but we know for sure that it can fail, and if it fails the complex and catastrophic humanitarian and environmental consequences of nuclear weapons know no borders and would affect us all. At this moment of higher nuclear risks than in decades, we call on all States to sign and ratify the Treaty. That is one concrete step that States can take to strengthen the failing global disarmament and non-proliferation regime, which needs all the reinforcement it can get.

Technological development is progressing at a rapid pace, raising profound questions from a legal, ethical, humanitarian and security perspective. We need to ensure the compliance of emerging technology with international law, in particular international humanitarian law, and also take into account ethical considerations. We welcome the fact that we were able to reach agreement on the agenda item of Working Group II and look forward to engaging constructively on the discussions as they progress. As many delegations before me have emphasized, the duplication of existing discussions in other forums needs to be avoided.

We know that the rules-based international order is our only protective shield against a world where might makes rights and where unilateralism rules instead of multilateralism. Austria is a staunch supporter of the

multilateral disarmament and non-proliferation regime. It is part of Austria's DNA, and it is in that spirit that we will engage in the work of the Commission.

Mr. Ipo (Cote d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, my delegation congratulates you, Sir, and the other members of the Bureau on your election and expresses Côte d'Ivoire's support and readiness to participate constructively in our work at the 2024 substantive session.

I would also like to express my delegation's full appreciation to Ambassador Akan Rakhmetullin of Kazakhstan for his exemplary conduct of the previous session and the preparatory process for this one.

Côte d'Ivoire associates itself with the statements made on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and the Group of African States (see A/CN.10/PV.391), to which it will provide the following additional observations in its national capacity:

The creation of a national commission for the prohibition of nuclear, radiological, biological, chemical, explosive and explosive substance weapons is among the priorities of the Ivorian Government for this year. It will allow us to pool our resources for a better implementation of the Ivorian policy on disarmament and the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems. This act is in perfect resonance with Côte d'Ivoire's commitment against the existence of such weapons, in particular nuclear weapons, in an international context marked by a worrisome rise in geopolitical tensions and the threat of nuclear confrontation. Preventing such a scenario is therefore an urgent undertaking that must guide the deliberations of this body, especially since the last three-year cycle did not allow for a consensus to be reached on this issue.

Two axes of effort are, from my delegation's point of view, to be explored to achieve that objective.

The first axis is that of a resolute desire for strict compliance with international and regional legal instruments relating to the limitation and prohibition of nuclear weapons. That involves compliance with all obligations under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the cornerstone of the non-proliferation architecture, in order to ensure the effectiveness of its application, in particular in terms of nuclear disarmament and the granting of negative

security assurances against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons by nuclear-weapon States to non-nuclear-weapon States.

The active promotion of the universalization of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty constitutes another aspect of that axis. It must be undertaken with the States that are not yet parties to it and, above all, with those listed in annex 2, on which its entry into force depends. Pending that deadline, the observation of moratoria on nuclear tests is necessary.

Strengthening the authority of the norm prohibiting nuclear weapons, which would accelerate their definitive elimination, is also an essential task. It should be deployed in the encouragement of universal adherence to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and the rigorous implementation of the Vienna Action Plan of June 2022 and the New York Declaration of December 2023. It is also crucial to implement regional commitments aimed at curbing the proliferation of nuclear weapons and to support the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones.

Preventing the acquisition of nuclear weapons by non-State actors remains critical through the full implementation of the International Convention on the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism and Security Council resolution 1540 (2004). Furthermore, it is also appropriate to strengthen the nuclear disarmament regime by supporting the negotiation of a treaty banning the production of fissile materials for the manufacture of nuclear weapons and nuclear explosive devices.

In addition to nuclear disarmament and without replacing it, the second axis must consist of the search by the possessing States for means of reducing the nuclear risk. It is appropriate to work in that context to ease tensions in order to remove the threat of a nuclear conflict by prioritizing preventive actions and resolving incidents and crises. That could be helped in particular by upholding the authority of the Joint Statement of January 2022 by the five nuclear-weapon States, committing to avoid any nuclear war and arms race and recognizing that a nuclear conflict cannot be won and must not be fought. The implementation and consolidation of bilateral and multilateral strategic risk mitigation frameworks are also necessary, as are measures for information exchange, confidence-building and transparency.

Emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, quantum computing, biotechnology and lethal autonomous weapons systems are developing rapidly and offer undeniable opportunities for scientific

and socioeconomic progress. They also have security and ethical implications related to their possible military application and their use for purposes diverted by malicious non-State actors.

Côte d'Ivoire, which has a real interest in developments in that area, as demonstrated by its co-sponsorship of the recent resolution 78/311, on artificial intelligence, welcomes the inclusion of that topic on the agenda of our discussions in order to deepen reflection on those issues. It believes that it is our responsibility to ensure that those emerging technologies are safe and secure and contribute to international peace and stability. In that perspective, we must actively ensure that their development, deployment and use are in accordance with international law, including the Charter of the United Nations, humanitarian law and fundamental human rights principles. It is also appropriate to identify measures that promote their responsible and ethical military use, as well as to prevent their misuse by ill-intentioned individuals and groups.

In conclusion, Côte d'Ivoire reaffirms its commitment to safeguarding and consolidating our collective security, as well as its cooperation with other delegations in fruitful work during the current session of the Disarmament Commission.

Ms. Bryant (Australia): Let me start by thanking you, Sir, for taking on the role of Chair. Having chaired the first year of the previous United Nations Disarmament Commission (UNDC) cycle in 2018, we understand well the task ahead of you and assure you of our full support.

Australia has an enduring commitment to a world without nuclear weapons. The challenges to achieving that goal are perhaps greater than ever, but that must also drive us to make progress on disarmament. As Secretary-General Guterres told the Security Council in March, "geopolitical tensions and mistrust have escalated the risk of nuclear warfare to its highest point in decades" (*S/PV.9579, p.2*). In the Indo-Pacific, we are seeing unprecedented military build-ups, with a lack of transparency and strategic reassurance. Globally, the proliferation of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction remains a threat that we cannot ignore.

The international disarmament regime is being blatantly undermined by a small number of countries, including permanent members of the Security Council. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea's continued

advancement of its illegal nuclear weapons and missile development programmes poses an ongoing and increasingly grave threat to international peace and stability. We are deeply disappointed by Russia's veto last week (see *S/PV.9591*) of the extension of the mandate of the Panel of Experts of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1718 (2006) and the impact that will have on Member States' ability to hold the Democratic People's Republic of Korea accountable.

Iran continues to escalate its nuclear activities and develop its missile programmes.

Australia remains deeply concerned by Russia's irresponsible and unacceptable nuclear rhetoric in the context of its illegal and immoral invasion of Ukraine. We condemn Russia's decision to revoke its ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and to suspend its participation in New START.

In the face of those significant challenges, we need the multilateral system to succeed now more than ever. UNDC is an important part of that system. We all worked hard to reach consensus outcomes on transparency and confidence-building measures in space and conventional weapons over the past two cycles. We must build on that momentum in this cycle. This is an opportunity to deliver focused, constructive recommendations on nuclear issues at a critical juncture, ahead of the 2026 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). To achieve that, we must avoid rehashing well-worn differences and focus our discussions on distinct areas of potential convergence. Australia was pleased to see a positive discussion on transparency in the context of the NPT review process. We hope for constructive dialogue on that issue in the UNDC.

Nuclear risk reduction offers another potential area for consensus. Australia is firmly of the view that nuclear risk reduction is not a substitute for tangible progress on disarmament. There is, however, considerable overlap between steps taken to reduce risk and those taken towards nuclear disarmament through improved understanding of doctrines, greater transparency and building trust. The presence of all States Members of the United Nations in this forum provides the opportunity for an inclusive discussion on those matters.

On the second UNDC agenda item this year, Australia recognizes the vital importance of ensuring that emerging technologies, including artificial

intelligence (AI), are used responsibly in civilian and military contexts. Efforts to tap into the considerable potential benefits of emerging technologies must go hand-in-hand with efforts to address potential risks.

The past year has seen political advances in the United Nations and elsewhere. We are now focused on coordinating efforts to implement those commitments on the responsible use of AI. That includes our commitment to the call to action issued at the Summit on Responsible Artificial Intelligence in the Military Domain and the Political Declaration on Responsible Military Use of AI and Autonomy, and our signing of the Bletchley Declaration on frontier AI. Australia also co-sponsored the first General Assembly resolution on AI (resolution 78/311).

We look forward to discussions on the topic of emerging technologies in the context of the UNDC's mandate. We see benefit in building common understandings on mitigating the risks and maximizing the benefits of emerging technologies, including as articulated in other United Nations international security forums.

There are many and increasing processes that address emerging technologies. It is essential for the UNDC to contribute to those discussions. In particular, the UNDC should seek to increase transparency and awareness of emerging technologies. By focusing on that aspect, the UNDC would avoid duplicating or undermining long-standing efforts across the United Nations and beyond and enhance trust and confidence among States.

The challenging security environment demands that we make progress on all those issues. In doing so, we must recognize the value of including diverse perspectives and working cooperatively to build bridges. Australia urges all delegations to focus on our shared goals and interests. There has never been a more important time for the UNDC to achieve a positive outcome.

Mr. Ahmed (Egypt): Egypt aligns itself with the statements delivered on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, the Group of Arab States and the Group of African States (see A/CN.10/PV.391).

We congratulate Your Excellency on your election to the helm of the United Nations Disarmament Commission (UNDC), and also congratulate the

members of your Bureau, as well as the two Chairs of the Working Groups. We assure you of Egypt's full support for your endeavours in that capacity.

In the same connection, we extend our profound gratitude to Ambassador Akan Rakhmetullin, Permanent Representative of Kazakhstan and former Chair of the Commission, and his team for all the sterling work they did until the last day of their tenure.

The willingness and desire of Member States to find an agreement on the chairmanship, Bureau and agenda of the Commission serve as a reminder of the unique role of UNDC as the United Nations only deliberative body on disarmament matters with universal membership, with a capacity to undertake in-depth deliberations and present recommendations in support of the implementation of the outcome of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD-1). This delegation attaches importance to the work of the Commission and supports an active and robust United Nations multilateral disarmament machinery at large.

Egypt believes that the UNDC has a bigger potential than what has been or is already being tapped. While we welcome the agreement on recommendations by Working Group II on transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities in 2023, we deeply regret the consistent failure to arrive at meaningful and substantive outcomes in Working Group I, on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. Even and equitable progress in both Working Groups is a prerequisite for the success of this body. SSOD-1's highest identified priority on nuclear disarmament and the prevention of nuclear war remains the frame of reference for guidance and measuring progress. That will require the constructive engagement of all Member States, particularly the nuclear-weapon States.

We are at a time when substantial progress and unwavering commitment to nuclear disarmament are needed more than ever. A world of declining security environments, rising great Power competition and polarization, the continuous quantitative and qualitative expansion of nuclear arsenals, and military and security doctrines that further consolidate the status of use and threat of use of nuclear weapons and base themselves on deterrence and strategic stability are a recipe for potentially catastrophic consequences.

The horrific humanitarian and environmental consequences of the use of nuclear weapons is a nightmare that cannot be lived with and must end.

The only sound and effective guarantee against the use and threat of use of nuclear weapons is their total elimination. The nuclear-weapon States need to honour their respective obligations and commitments on nuclear disarmament, including under article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). We echo the call for the urgent commencement of negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament for the early conclusion of a comprehensive convention on nuclear weapons. No confidence-building or risk-reduction measure is admissible as a substitute for nuclear disarmament.

On the eve of the kick-off of the work of Working Group I, we call upon Member States to agree on recommendations and make significant progress on the following points.

The first is urgent, concrete, time-bound nuclear disarmament in a manner that is transparent, verifiable and irreversible.

The second is a successful conclusion of the eleventh Review Conference of the Parties to the NPT in 2026 after two successive failures. Substantial progress on nuclear disarmament is essential to attaining that objective and the preservation of the relevance and credibility of the Treaty and the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation global regime as a whole. The full and effective implementation of obligations and commitments related to nuclear disarmament, on the one hand, and nuclear non-proliferation, on the other, are crucial and mutually reinforcing. Meanwhile, and concurrently relevant, we reiterate the inalienable right of each State to develop research, production and use of nuclear energy, including the sovereign right to develop a full national nuclear fuel cycle for peaceful purposes, without discrimination.

Thirdly, the discussions that started at the strengthening of the review process last summer in the Working Group on transparency and accountability by nuclear-weapon States, through benchmarks and actions on nuclear disarmament with established deadlines and reporting their implementation, provide a window of opportunity.

Fourthly, pending the elimination of nuclear weapons, we must conclude universal, unconditional, non-discriminatory and legally binding instruments to effectively assure all non-nuclear-weapon States

against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons under any circumstances, in addition to the commitment of nuclear-weapon States to a no-first use policy.

Fifth is the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East, pursuant to numerous Security Council and General Assembly resolutions, as well as in accordance with the Middle East resolution (NPT/CONF.1995/32 (Part I), annex) adopted at the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the NPT and the 2010 roadmap. The recommendations should support the realization of the universality of the NPT, including through Israel's accession to the Treaty and the placement of all its nuclear activities and facilities under the comprehensive safeguards agreements of the International Atomic Energy Agency. The nuclear threats aimed by an Israeli minister against civilians in Gaza in October reconfirmed the urgency of that matter.

Sixth is support for further progress at 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, towards the elaboration of a legally binding instrument to establish the desired zone. After four substantively rich sessions, all Conference members and invited observers are called upon to participate and engage constructively and in good faith, if they have not already done so.

As for the topic of Working Group II, on recommendations on common understanding related to emerging technologies in the context of international security, we would like to highlight the following.

First, we joined the consensus on assigning that topic to Working Group II on the understanding that special attention would be given in the deliberations of the Group to the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in the context of international security, including lethal autonomous weapons systems.

Secondly, it is important to address not only the risks and threats posed by the use of AI in the context of international security, but also the opportunities they may provide, taking into consideration the evolving nature of such technologies.

Thirdly, UNDC could play a crucial role in carrying forward the discussions on the relevant principles and rules, and make realistic recommendations on the next steps, including on a two-tiered approach through

the prohibition of fully autonomous weapons and regulating other uses of the military applications of artificial intelligence.

Fourthly, while noting the possible contributions of the regional and cross-regional initiatives on the development of guidelines and rules on AI security, it is important to avoid possible fragmentation and for the relevant endeavours and deliberations to be conducted under the auspices of the United Nations as the most inclusive, equitable and effective platform for the development of international rules in that domain.

Finally, in light of the central role of international cooperation and assistance, particularly through capacity-building in the field of AI, and to address the technological gaps between developed and developing States, it is crucial to support States' capacities in that domain, including by sharing related technologies and avoiding any attempts to place restrictions on the transfer of such technologies to developing countries.

Mr. Mahmud (Nigeria): The delegation of Nigeria congratulates you, Sir, and your able team on assuming the United Nations Disarmament Commission's leadership at this substantive session. We also congratulate the Vice-Chairs, of which Nigeria is one, and the Chairs of Working Groups I and II. We assure you of our full support and cooperation. We have no doubt that our work will benefit tremendously from your vast experience and commitment.

Nigeria aligns itself with the statements delivered by the representative of Indonesia, on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, and the representative of Angola, on behalf of the Group of African States (see A/CN.10/PV.391), and wishes to make the following remarks in its national capacity.

The present geopolitical tension is very alarming, and trust in multilateralism seems to have been lost altogether. The disarmament machinery reflects a trust deficit and is negatively impacted and incapacitated by it. There is an urgent imperative to recalibrate and revitalize the disarmament machinery in order to enable it to deliver its mandate, for which rebuilding trust is a necessary condition.

My delegation calls for constructive deliberation, enhanced cooperation, positive political will and flexibility from all Member States. Our appeal is directed especially at the nuclear-weapon States as we kickstart this current cycle of the United Nations Disarmament Commission (UNDC) in order to achieve

robust progress that would lead to consensus and the desired results. Nigeria is ready to engage actively and constructively with all parties to reach agreement on substantive recommendations on the agenda items of the Commission.

Nigeria underscores the importance of the UNDC as the sole specialized, deliberative body within the United Nations multilateral disarmament machinery. My delegation wishes to stress that the UNDC needs to streamline and improve its working methods to enable it to deliver on its mandate.

Nigeria reiterates its deep concern over the approach of nuclear-weapon States to their nuclear disarmament obligations and their lack of commitment to accomplishing the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals, in accordance with their relevant multilateral legal obligations. That brings my delegation to reaffirm the importance of the unanimous conclusion of the International Court of Justice that there exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and to conclude negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control, as well as the 1996 advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the subject.

Nigeria therefore calls upon the nuclear-weapon States to fulfil their multilateral legal obligations on nuclear disarmament and to implement the unequivocal undertaking they provided in 2000, and further reiterated in 2010, to achieve the total elimination of nuclear weapons. We firmly believe that the only guarantee against the use of nuclear weapons is their total elimination.

My delegation stresses that the universalization of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is dependent upon strict compliance with its three pillars: disarmament, non-proliferation and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. My delegation expresses its disappointment over the consecutive failure of the ninth and tenth Review Conferences of the Parties to the NPT to adopt a consensual outcome document, despite the constructive engagement of several States parties to the Treaty. That failure should serve as a stimulus to work harder towards achieving nuclear disarmament. We therefore stress the importance of fulfilling the commitments made at the 1995, 2000 and 2010 NPT Review Conferences.

Nuclear weapons represent a grave existential threat to humankind. Nigeria therefore underscores the importance of resolution 70/34 as an integral part of

the multilateral disarmament effort. My delegation is mindful of the catastrophic humanitarian consequences and calls on all States to take all necessary action in that regard.

Nigeria remains proud of the processes that led to the adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) and its entry into force. The TPNW has a unique legitimacy in furthering the global objective of the total elimination of nuclear weapons. Nigeria is fully committed to the implementation of the Treaty and will continue to engage constructively for its universalization.

Nigeria wishes to highlight the efforts of United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in terms of its contribution to disarmament measures and other future challenges globally. My delegation notes the valuable input of the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa on the basis of African ownership. My delegation promises to work stringently towards fulfilling the mandate of the UNDC, as highlighted by the first special session of the General Assembly on disarmament.

The delegation of Nigeria underscores the importance of continued respect for the inalienable right to peaceful uses of outer space, and emphatically highlights the importance of preventing the weaponization of outer space to preserve peace and security to the benefit of humankind. Nigeria remains committed to using its space science capabilities for development purposes, and to that end we have embarked on several development projects, some of which include a desertification sensitivity index, population dissymmetry analysis and carbon emission assessment. Nigeria firmly believes that space technology has the immense potential to benefit both developed and developing countries. Therefore, there is a need to promote equal, non-discriminatory access to outer space, irrespective of levels of social, economic or scientific development.

My delegation reaffirms the importance of the prevention of an arms race in outer space through a legally binding instrument that would complement the international legal framework in a manner that allows for the equal exploration of outer space based on the principles of non-appropriation and peaceful uses of outer space, in conformity with the five United Nations treaties governing space activities.

The delegation of Nigeria welcomes the adoption of the topic for Working Group II. We are of the position that emerging technologies present a potential platform for sustainable development. However, dedicated efforts will be needed to avoid the further marginalization of developing nations, especially on the African continent, through the unintended consequences of new and emerging technologies. Such action should focus on inclusive approaches and capacity-building. Multilateral efforts should also prioritize the integrity and objectivity of algorithms to avoid the risk of artificial intelligence having the unintended effect of racial profiling and discrimination.

In conclusion, as we start the 2024 substantive session, my delegation remains hopeful that Member States will be flexible as we begin deliberations in the coming days.

Ms. Soza-Morales (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I congratulate you, Sir, and the other members of the Bureau on your election to guide the work of the Disarmament Commission. I would also like to extend our congratulations to Georgia and El Salvador, chairing the Working Groups. I can assure you that you have the you can count on the full support and cooperation of Guatemala in the conduct of your work.

Nuclear risks around the world have increased over the past few years. Proof of this is that, according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, in 2023 there has been significant updating of nuclear arsenals and overall expenditures have reached \$2.2 trillion. That is a very serious concern because in the world we live in today, the absence of action has led us ever closer to a possible nuclear catastrophe.

Even as the five permanent members of the Security Council have acknowledged that a nuclear war cannot be won and therefore should not be fought, it is clear that nuclear rhetoric has heightened the perception of the threat of the use of nuclear weapons, which is a threat to life as we know it. That means that the current international context is characterized by threats to peace and security, confrontation, armed conflicts and frequent terrorist attacks. Even more obvious is the fact that we face the danger of weapons of mass destruction falling into the hands of non-State actors or the potential occurrence of a major nuclear incident.

It is incredible that while spending on the development or updating of weapons continues to increase, we have seen in various forums that there are

insufficient resources to address the major challenges facing our peoples, such as hunger, poverty and disease. Moreover, in the context of international efforts to counter such threats, in August 2022, at the tenth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, it was regrettable to see, after four weeks of negotiations, that a consensus could not be reached. In Geneva, the Conference on Disarmament not only did not allow observers to actively participate in the Conference, thereby limiting the presentation of various interests and capacities, but it also did not manage to reach agreement on a programme of work, which prevented it from initiating substantive deliberations and prolonged the long-standing stalemate.

That is why I would reiterate the statement made by the Secretary-General at the Conference on 26 February, in which he requested that the body be reformed and stressed that the paralysis and stalemate that have defined it were not acceptable. In light of that, my delegation reiterates the importance of this forum as the sole specialized deliberative body within the disarmament machinery of the United Nations. The Disarmament Commission offers us an opportunity to discuss specific issues of disarmament with a view to generating concrete recommendations to the General Assembly for the benefit of the interests of humankind.

It is imperative that we achieve concrete results in the current cycle of the Disarmament Commission. We therefore urge all Member States, in particular the nuclear-weapon States, to demonstrate political will and the necessary flexibility. Guatemala hopes that we can lay the groundwork to ensure the successful conclusion of that process. With that in mind, Guatemala maintains its commitment to achieving a world free of nuclear weapons and is a firm promoter of general, complete and verifiable disarmament. We are convinced that coexistence in a world without nuclear weapons is possible and that attaining international peace and security without recourse to nuclear deterrence is not only an ethical imperative but an achievable goal in line with the founding principles and purposes of the United Nations,

Along those lines, it is a great source of pride for my country to be a party to the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean, which established the first nuclear-weapon-free zone in a densely populated area and served as a model for other, similar treaties. What is more, the establishment of the

zone serves as a reminder to the nuclear Powers of our region's rejection of such weapons. We also reaffirm our position that the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons complements the goals of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and strengthens its three pillars: nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and the peaceful use of nuclear energy.

With respect to the topic of Work Group II, on common understandings related to emerging technologies in the context of international security, Guatemala is optimistic about the possibility of addressing a topic that has the potential of being a catalyst for the progress of humankind but that should also be the subject of extensive debate to limit its potentially negative consequences at the global level. We are aware of the importance that our deliberations will have in achieving a common understanding of such technologies because they raise the ethical, legal, moral and technical implications of their use, as well as their potentially positive impact on international peace and security.

My country acknowledges the efforts that are being undertaken in other forums on emerging technologies and hopes that deliberations within the United Nations Disarmament Commission will contribute positively to this forum and not duplicate efforts, as has occurred in previous processes. We would also remind all States that such technologies should be used for peaceful purposes and the common good of humankind by promoting the sustainable development of all countries, independently of their level of scientific and technological development,

Lastly, I reiterate that the international community is confronting challenges in its efforts to strengthen its action for peace. That requires first and foremost the expression of political resolve within the concert of nations and a set of concrete, verifiable actions based on a specific timetable to help us move from rhetoric towards action. Mr. Chair, you can be sure that my delegation will contribute in a constructive way to the deliberations of the Working Groups that have been established for this session of the conference.

Mr. Kalmar (Israel): First, I would like to congratulate you, Sir, on assuming the chairmanship and assure you of my delegation's support in the implementation of your duties. I would also like to congratulate the Working Group Chairs, Georgia and El Salvador, and wish them success in facilitating the work of their Groups.

The importance of the United Nations Disarmament Commission (UNDC), as outlined at the first special session of the General Assembly on disarmament in 1978, arises from its function within the international disarmament machinery to, inter alia, consider elements of a comprehensive programme for disarmament. To fulfil that mandate effectively, it is clear that the UNDC must make recommendations while striking the essential balance between what we strive to achieve and what is plausible, given the prevailing global and regional circumstances.

In that respect, Israel believes that the international community should be focusing primarily on compliance, a pillar of arms control and disarmament governance. Looking to develop new mechanisms, without the full implementation of and compliance with the existing ones, falls short of addressing the multitude of current and future global security challenges.

Israel values the contribution of international arms control and disarmament mechanisms to global non-proliferation. In order to maintain strategic stability, it is crucial to address the systematic lack of adherence to international disarmament norms and obligations. The Middle East, in particular, is still struggling with a long-standing culture of non-compliance. It is worth recalling that to this day, four out of the five cases of serious violations of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) since the Treaty entered into force have taken place in the Middle East.

The nuclear activities of Iran and Syria remain an open file to be decided by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Those NPT States parties have knowingly and deliberately violated the Treaty. Iran's conduct over the past years — in which, under the guise of ongoing negotiations, it continued to make rapid progress in its nuclear capabilities, including by enriching uranium to a near weapons grade — indicates that Iran has never given up on its pursuit of military nuclear prospects. Iran presents a clear and immediate threat to the global non-proliferation regime and to global security.

On 4 March, IAEA Director General Grossi stated that there had been no progress in resolving the outstanding safeguards issues and that Iran had been unable to provide technically credible explanations for its nuclear activity. Let us remember that this is a regime which has repeatedly called for the complete annihilation of Israel. Those who doubt its resolve need look no further than Iran's financing and training of terrorist groups in the Middle East, including Hamas, the perpetrators of the genocidal 7 October massacre.

With regard to the use of chemical weapons in Syria, the grave challenge lies in that, despite the great efforts of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and the international community, Syria is still attempting to advance the development and production of chemical weapons as we speak. The threat is further amplified by the imminent risk of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction to non-State actors. It is crucial to address the continuous disdain of some States of the region for their obligations. Non-compliance cannot be tolerated and must be tackled, and States must be held accountable for their violations.

In the upcoming discussions, we are likely to hear — as we have already heard — some countries express their opinion with regard to establishing a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East. That initiative is first and foremost a regional matter and not a global one. Given that the Disarmament Commission is a global framework, the UNDC is hardly the place to address that issue.

Furthermore, experience from other regions in the world demonstrates that any framework of regional security can only be the outcome of the mutual political desire of all parties to engage with each other. Such regional architecture must take into consideration the security concerns of every State and reflect arrangements freely arrived at by all States of the region, as stipulated in the 1999 UNDC report (A/54/42) containing principles and guidelines for the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones. Without adherence to those well-established principles, there will be no useful basis for discourse with regard to the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction.

Ill-motivated initiatives, such as the United Nations Conference on a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and other Weapons of Mass Destruction, run contrary to the well-established guidelines and principles that have served as a basis for other nuclear-weapon-free zones and are unhelpful. Israel will not take part in an artificial process that bypasses established practice.

Emerging technologies are crucial for human development, offer tremendous opportunities and are both a product of and a catalyst for social and economic innovation. They are force multipliers that can assist humankind across a wide range of fields, including food security and climate change. Those technologies are developing at a rapid pace, offering many opportunities

while also raising challenges and concerns. Their innovative nature, technological complexity and wide range of applications require that economic, social, and national security concerns be taken into consideration as they spread. As technology is neutral, States should strive to agree on common understandings by which emerging technology can be used responsibly.

We believe that a comprehensive approach in our discussions in the upcoming weeks, taking into account the various compliance challenges we face today, is the best avenue for the UNDC to fully realize its mandate and advance towards achieving global security and prosperity. Israel hopes for successful deliberation in this year's UNDC plenary session.

The Chair: I shall now call on those delegations wishing to speak in exercise of the right of reply.

Mr. Zhukov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The Russian Federation categorically rejects all unfounded and baseless accusations. Despite all of our attempts to return the discussion to a constructive path, the delegations of Western States continue to circulate provocative statements detached from reality on the subject of the special military operation in Ukraine. Such statements have nothing to do with the United Nations Disarmament Commission mandate and the agenda we have agreed upon today.

For those who are slow to understand, we are ready to repeat that there are obvious reasons that left us no choice but to use military force to protect people living in eastern Ukraine from neo-Nazi tyranny. The Russian leadership has given detailed explanations about them. We have also repeatedly spoken about this at many international venues.

Let me recall that the current armed confrontation was preceded by a coup d'état supported by the West in 2014, which provoked a large-scale crisis and internal civil conflict in that country. Kyiv sent regular troops against civilians in the south-east who disagreed with the so-called revolution of dignity. For eight years before the start of the special military operation, the Kyiv regime killed and mocked thousands of Russian-speaking citizens of Donbas. Throughout those years, Russia sought to persuade the West to stop supporting the criminal actions of the Ukrainian authorities and to resolve the conflict peacefully. However, as it turned out, the West and its protégés in Kyiv had completely different goals.

The special military operation has a solid legal basis. It was launched in accordance with the official request of the sovereign Governments of the Donetsk People's Republic and the Luhansk People's Republic on the basis of Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations, which provides for the right to individual and collective self-defence. I recall that as of 24 February 2022, both of those Republics already enjoyed the status of recognized sovereign States. Now, in accordance with the free expression of will of the people living in the Donetsk People's Republic and the Luhansk People's Republic, as is known, they are part of the Russian Federation. Thus, the main goal of the special military operation is to protect our people, as well as to suppress threats to the security of our country emanating from the territories controlled by Kyiv. Among the priority tasks is the restoration of the rights of the Russian language in accordance with the international obligations of Kyiv, as well as denazification.

On the issue that the Russian army allegedly violates the norms of international humanitarian law during military operations, our servicemen participating in the operation have orders to categorically avoid attacks and strikes on civilian infrastructure. Only military and related infrastructure facilities, equipment stockpiles and service members are subject to attacks.

At the same time, and we want to especially emphasize this, the Ukrainian army acts quite to the contrary, using civilians as human shields. Ukrainian battalions place heavy weapons in residential areas, near schools, hospitals and kindergartens. Enjoying no success on the battlefield on the line of contact with the Russian army, they regularly shell peaceful areas of Belgorod, Donetsk and other border Russian territories, and also commit other terrorist acts in Russia. There are thousands of documents providing evidence of this.

We note that all the goals and objectives of the special military operation set by the President of Russia will be met. Everyone can be sure of that.

In connection with the accusations of Western countries against Russia regarding threats of use of nuclear weapons, we would like to state that this is nothing more than another element of a rabid anti-Russian campaign. Russian doctrinal guidelines in the area of nuclear deterrence are outlined very clearly, do not allow for broad interpretation and are purely defensive in nature. Russia's official statements on that issue do not go beyond those guidelines and are fully consistent with our country's international obligations.

At present, the situation in the area of international security has deteriorated to a dangerous extent. It is the fault of the West that a serious crisis has broken out in Europe involving nuclear Powers. Aggressive rhetoric has been heard from Western capitals more than once. Against that background, Russian officials have been compelled several times to address the issue of increasing strategic risks and, accordingly, nuclear danger.

Those statements were clearly directed at the United States and NATO. Their hostile expansion, with the creation of an anti-Russian bridgehead in Ukraine — of which I spoke earlier — has threatened Russia's fundamental interests. By declaring the goal of inflicting a strategic defeat on Russia and becoming increasingly involved in the confrontation, the West is teetering on the brink of a direct military clash. That raises the risk of an armed conflict between nuclear Powers, which all of the nuclear five have committed to preventing, in accordance with the Joint Statement of 3 January 2022. It would seem that the United States and its allies have come to believe in their ability to control escalation in all circumstances and exert force on Russia without harm to themselves. This is a dangerous delusion, fraught with catastrophic consequences. It is the essence of our signals and warnings to the West. It is not the language of threats, but the classic logic of deterrence.

In connection with the unfounded allegations of Russia's violation of the Budapest Memorandum, we recall that the Memorandum is a component of a package of agreements that, in the form of a political declaration, imposed equal obligations on all participants. Having signed those documents, Russia has strictly complied with them. However, Western countries, historically striving to tear Ukraine away from Russia forever, deliberately disregarded the sovereignty of that young, extremely heterogeneous and therefore very fragile country. They unceremoniously interfered in the internal and external affairs of Kyiv in every way, imposing an uncontested, Western-oriented future. Despite Ukraine's initially neutral status, they dragged it into schemes of bloc confrontation with Russia, cynically playing on the Russophobic and nationalist sentiments of a small proportion of the population.

When difficulties arose with the implementation of those plans, the West sharply raised the stakes and facilitated a bloody coup d'état, to which we have already referred. The radicals who seized power in Kyiv

provoked an acute crisis within the country. Having refused to recognize the interests of a significant part of Ukrainian society, they finally split it; that is what has called into question the existence of Ukraine as a single, full-fledged and capable State.

The 1994 agreements were also undermined by the destabilizing course of Washington and its allies towards unrestrained NATO expansion and the military-political development of the post-Soviet space to the detriment of Russia's fundamental security interests. That fundamentally contradicts the content of the Budapest package of documents, which contain provisions similar to the principle of equal and indivisible security and express a commitment to the collective principles of building the architecture of European security.

Kyiv itself did not comply with the Budapest commitments, in particular those that implied countering the growth of aggressive nationalism and chauvinism. Nationalism was openly encouraged in Kyiv, and in its radical forms. The glorification of Nazi criminals, who are today given standing ovations in the parliaments of some Western countries, has become part of State policy and ideology. Ultranationalist militants have been involved in punitive operations in the east of Ukraine, which has only strengthened the resolve to fight among that part of the population that honours the victory over Hitler's and Bandera's Nazism. The desire to defend their beliefs and uphold their vital interests compelled the residents of a number of regions to exercise their right to self-determination.

Thus, the unity and territorial integrity of Ukraine were destroyed first and foremost by Kyiv's own destructive policies and the West's harmful interference. Russia's obligations under the Budapest Memorandum do not apply to such circumstances. We are not obliged to recognize coups d'état in Ukraine or its renunciation of neutral status, to force regions of that country to remain part of it against the will of the local population, or to ignore the growing threats emanating from Ukrainian territory. That is the real, not the inverted, state of affairs concerning the implementation of the Budapest Memorandum and the situation in Ukraine as a whole.

Mr. Mun (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): My delegation would like to exercise its right of reply in response to the provocative statements made by the delegations of the United States, the European Union (EU), Poland, Australia and some other countries today.

My delegation categorically rejects those unsubstantiated and groundless allegations, as they misrepresent the nature of the geopolitical tension in the Korean peninsula and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's policy of strengthening its national defence capability. It is not the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, but the United States and its vassal States that have sparked military confrontation, thereby exacerbating the situation in the peninsula. For decades since the 1950s, the United States has persistently conducted joint military exercises with the Republic of Korea involving nuclear assets.

The long-standing nuclear threat and blackmail have compelled the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to take an inevitable path in order to safeguard its sovereignty and national security. In defiance of the stern warnings of my Government and the just demands of the international community to stop the military provocations and war drills disturbing peace and stability in the Korean peninsula and the region, the United States has opted to enforce its anti-Democratic People's Republic of Korea aggressive attempts with more overt actions.

In March, the United States again staged the massive joint military exercise Freedom Shield, simulating a full-fledged war against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The exercise consisted of a surprise strike at the strategic bases of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, such as occupation of the capital city of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, as well as decapitation operations pursuant to the so-called Operational Plan 5015. Furthermore, the United States has introduced nuclear-powered submarines and strategic bombers into the region of the Korean peninsula, openly talking about the end of regime of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. That reality on the ground clearly shows that the vicious cycle of the aggravated situation in and around the Korean peninsula is attributable to none other than the United States, which intentionally heightens military tensions for the purpose of stifling the Democratic People's Republic of Korea by use of force.

Therefore, nobody can dispute the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's right to self-defence to build up its physical strength and deter aggressive military actions. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea's countermeasures vis-à-vis the security threats from the United States are an absolutely reasonable, normal and reflective response. The only way to prevent

the vicious cycle of military tensions in and around the Korean peninsula is for the United States to articulate its stand, such as the abandonment of its commitment to deploying strategic assets in the Korean peninsula and a halt to the string of combined drills against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

It is deeply regrettable that some countries, including those of the EU and some other Western countries, are intentionally turning a blind eye to the aggressive and provocative United States/Republic of Korea military drills, in blind pursuit of the nefarious hostile policy of the United States. Such countries, such as Australia, are not qualified to talk about non-proliferation matters, given the fact that they are wrecking the international non-proliferation regime through the enforcement of the trilateral security partnership known as AUKUS, in defiance of the strong protests of regional countries. Their illogical and absurd arguments about the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's development of self-defensive national defence capabilities represent such an outdated mentality and double standards as to call into question who did it instead of what was done. We urge the EU and those countries that blindly follow the United States hostile policy towards the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to stop their groundless accusations against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea if they are truly interested in being engaged in solving the issue of the Korean peninsula.

Once again, our position is clear. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea's policy of boosting its nuclear capability is aimed at deterring the nuclear threats of the United States, preventing war and safeguarding the eternal security of the State and regional peace and stability in every way and everywhere. It will continue to build up strategic power of a more advanced type to contain and control any threat, including the nuclear threat from the United States and its followers, with immediate, overwhelming and decisive countermeasures.

Mr. Rahimi Majd (Islamic Republic of Iran): I take the floor in exercise of the right of reply of my delegation in response to unsubstantiated allegations and unwarranted concerns raised by some delegations, particularly those of Latvia, Poland, the European Union, Australia, the United States and the Israeli regime, about Iran's nuclear programme or its defensive missile programme. In firmly rejecting those accusations, I feel obliged to draw the attention of the Commission to some important facts, as follows.

The Islamic Republic of Iran's nuclear programme is fully peaceful and will remain so forever. Iran is determined, as confirmed to date by the International Atomic Energy Agency on numerous occasions, to remain fully committed to its obligations under its Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement. We must prioritize our deliberations on real and genuine threats, specifically the non-compliance of nuclear States with their commitments under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the Israeli regime's nuclear weapons programme. We must avoid being diverted by unfounded and unsubstantiated allegations, particularly those related to Iran's peaceful nuclear programme.

Those baseless accusations represent yet another attempt by the Israeli regime and its allies to deflect the attention of the international community from the ongoing heinous atrocities and acts of genocide committed by the apartheid regime against the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip. The regime, backed by the United States Government, keeps accumulating all kinds of weapons of mass destruction without being a party to any legally binding international disarmament instrument or subject to any safeguards or verification mechanism. The Israeli regime has persistently and blatantly violated fundamental rules and principles of international law, international humanitarian law and human rights law for over seven decades, including flagrant violations recorded over the past six months. Those violations include the indiscriminate bombing and shelling of Gaza, the collective punishment of Palestinians, forced displacements and transfers of civilians, the deliberate targeting of civilians, notably women and children, as well as civilian infrastructure,

and the use of starvation by cutting off supplies to civilians in Gaza,

I wish to draw the Commission's attention to today's heinous attack by the Israeli regime against the consular section of the Iranian Embassy in the Syrian capital, Damascus, which left several killed and injured and is a gross violation of international regulations, especially the 1961 Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations. Furthermore, the regime has committed various terrorist attacks against nuclear scientists and initiated a number of sabotage attacks against nuclear facilities.

I take this opportunity to reiterate our well-known position on the Ukraine crisis. The Islamic Republic of Iran has consistently taken a stance of impartiality since the outset of the Ukraine conflict, and that principled position remains unchanged. Furthermore, Iran has consistently advocated for peace and an immediate cessation of hostilities in Ukraine and continues to do so. Therefore, any claim regarding Iran's involvement in the sale, export or transfer of arms in contravention of its international obligations is completely unfounded and categorically rejected.

The Chair: We have presently two more speakers inscribed to exercise their right of reply: the State of Palestine and the Syrian Arab Republic. Regrettably, however, I have been advised by the secretariat that we need to end the meeting at 6 p.m. sharp. I assure those two colleagues that tomorrow, at the first opportunity for delivering statements in exercise of the right of reply, their two delegations will be on the top of the list.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.