



General Assembly

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Official Records

President: Mr. Francis (Trinidad and Tobago)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Muhamad (Malaysia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

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

Agenda item 63 (continued)

Use of the veto

Special report of the Security Council (A/78/861)

The Acting President: The General Assembly will now hold a debate, pursuant to resolution 76/262 of 26 April 2022, on the situation as to which the veto was cast by a permanent member at the 9616th meeting of the Security Council on 24 April 2024 under the agenda item entitled “Non-proliferation”. In connection with this debate, the Assembly has before it a special report of the Security Council circulated in document A/78/861.

I shall now read out the following brief remarks on behalf of the President of the General Assembly.

Statement by the President

The Acting President: “We convene this meeting based on the standing mandate for a General Assembly debate when a veto is cast in the Security Council, in line with resolution 76/262, also aligned with the provisions of the Charter related to the powers and functions of the General Assembly in matters pertaining to the maintenance of international peace and security.

“I welcome the timely submission of the special report of the Security Council on the veto cast in the Council on 24 April under the agenda item “Non-proliferation”. Regrettably and yet again, the Council failed to find consensus on a draft resolution addressing weapons of mass destruction in outer space.

“I encourage all delegations to use today’s discussion as an opportunity to address the urgent need to safeguard the United Nations non-proliferation objectives on Earth or in the orbit. The 1967 Outer Space Treaty clearly prohibits States parties from placing in orbit around the Earth any objects carrying nuclear weapons or any other kinds of weapons of mass destruction, installing such weapons on celestial bodies or stationing such weapons in outer space in any other manner.

“Outer space does not belong to individual nations. Its peaceful and sustainable use is not subject to national appropriation and must be a place of peace and cooperation for the benefit and in the interests of all countries. That is not a mere aspiration and should be respected by virtue of article IV of the 1967 Treaty.

“The militarization of outer space is a very concerning trend. Besides further deepening mistrust and divisions, it inevitably threatens life on Earth and could have catastrophic consequences. Any arms race in outer space is in violation of the Treaty, and we must do all we can to keep outer space weapon-free.

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the translation of speeches delivered in other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room AB-0928 (verbatimrecords@un.org). Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (<http://documents.un.org>).



“I urge all Member States, especially those with higher capabilities to explore the outer space, to fully respect the provisions of the Treaty.

“The Office of the President of the General Assembly will continue the practice of transmitting a short summary of the plenary debate to the President of the Security Council.”

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The General Assembly’s meetings convened in accordance with its resolution 76/262 on the consideration of instances of the use of the veto power in the Security Council can be divided into two types. One situation is when the use of the veto is conditioned by the acceptability or non-acceptability of a particular decision from the point of view of protecting national interests. Another case is when a provocative initiative is introduced to the Security Council in pursuit of the sole aim of casting one permanent member of the Security Council in an unfavourable light. That is precisely the situation we encountered when considering the American draft resolution S/2024/302.

As is known, on 24 April the Russian Federation voted in the Security Council against the American draft resolution on the non-placement of nuclear weapons and other types of weapons of mass destruction in outer space (see S/PV.9616). Despite its beautiful name, that document not only did not meet the goal declared in the title, since it had already been met by other international agreements, but could also lead to far-reaching consequences for the entire disarmament process.

During the negotiations on it, we tried in vain to get the authors to answer the question: Why try to reaffirm existing international commitments in the field of space exploration through the Security Council? After all, we all know that the 1967 Outer Space Treaty, signed by 136 States, already contains an unconditional ban on the deployment of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) in outer space. If there are reasons to doubt its compliance, then why not start this discussion at specialized venues where all members of the General Assembly are represented? The Security Council is authorized to respond to immediate threats to international peace and security, and it is on that role, and not on abstract legal and disarmament discussions, that its resources should be spent. We have not received an answer to that question from our American colleagues.

It is important to mention another extremely dangerous element of the American draft. It is an

obvious attempt to use the Council to introduce new, previously unregistered restrictions, not previously recorded anywhere, including in the Outer Space Treaty, which raises major questions from a legal point of view. Naming such obligations without a preliminary expert, legal and technical discussion is unacceptable. In such a scenario, they do not represent practical value for resolving, on the one hand, the tasks of preventing an arms race in outer space (PAROS) or, on the other, the non-proliferation of WMD.

We were even ready to turn a blind eye to that obvious shortcoming. At the same time, in order to lend at least some meaning to the efforts of our American and Japanese colleagues, we proposed taking that opportunity to give the necessary impetus to launching meaningful work on the specified aspects at specialized disarmament platforms. We also took into account the fact that such a signal would be in great demand in the current conditions of the emerging stagnation on that negotiating track. The essence of our efforts was an amendment (S/2024/323) that called on States to take urgent measures aimed at a complete ban on the placement of all types of weapons in space. Let me emphasize that the amendment addressed not only WMD, but all weapons in general. That is, our proposals went much further than the American draft in preventing an arms race in space. As a result, negotiations could begin on a multilateral legally binding document, during which American proposals on new obligations regarding the development of WMD specifically designed for placement in outer space would be discussed. We did not otherwise touch the American text in any way.

However, the American and Japanese co-authors flatly refused to take our proposals into account and were unable to explain why they had done so, either during the negotiations on the text of the draft or in the Security Council Chamber. It is unlikely that they will deign to explain their position to the delegations gathered in the General Assembly Hall today. I will answer that question for them myself. They do not want to do so because the military doctrines of almost all key Western countries now provide for the military exploration of outer space. The United States and its allies some time ago announced plans that included the deployment of weapons, in particular strike combat systems in outer space, the use of force or the threat of force in space or from space, as well as in relation to space and its use for conducting military operations. That is directly set out in a number of space

strategies of Western States that can be easily found in the public domain. Therefore, it is no coincidence that in all previous years the United States has actively resisted any initiative aimed at preventing an arms race in space. One striking example is the long-term blocking by the United States of the Russian-Chinese proposal regarding the draft treaty on the prevention of the placement of weapons in outer space, which was prepared back in 2008.

Make no mistake today — all statements by Western countries about their interest in a dialogue on keeping outer space peaceful, of which we will hear many today in the Hall, are nothing but hypocrisy and double standards. Their vote against our amendment on the non-deployment of any type of weapons in outer space is the best illustration of that. At the same time, we thank those seven members of the Security Council that voted for our amendment. They proved that the Council has enough sensible delegations that reflect the will of the United Nations majority, which consistently shares the goals of PAROS in common with us.

Russia is unwaveringly committed to its obligations in accordance with international law. However, we will not indulge someone's aggressive plans or give the green light to politicized, double-dealing initiatives. As is well known to everyone in the Hall, for many years we have been pursuing a constructive line and promoting initiatives aimed at preventing an arms race in outer space in the First Committee, the Conference on Disarmament, the United Nations Disarmament Commission and the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space. We also consistently adhere to our consistent position on the imperative of preserving outer space exclusively for peaceful purposes.

Although we have not seen and do not expect a balanced and objective approach from Western countries, we, guided by the special responsibility of a permanent member of the Security Council to maintain peace and stability, proposed our alternative to the Security Council draft resolution on PAROS following the results of the vote on the American text. It is based on language that is well known to everyone in the General Assembly and enjoys the very broad support of the overwhelming majority of States Members of the United Nations. The scope of our project is broad and aimed at confirming the commitments of States not to use outer space for the deployment of either WMD or conventional weapons. That is the only way to prevent outer space from becoming yet another area of tension

and armed confrontation and to ensure free and equal access to outer space for all States without exception.

We intend to open our draft resolution, before the voting on it, for co-authorship by all members of the General Assembly. We call on delegations to co-sponsor the draft in accordance with the established procedure. We hope that this time, common sense and interest in preserving outer space as a peaceful environment will prevail over attempts to politicize a topic that is so important to normal life on Earth among the majority of Council members. We urge them not to squander it.

In conclusion, I again stress the absurdity of the situation that has developed around the American draft resolution. After all, the American Permanent Representative herself said in her explanation of vote that the Russian President has repeatedly confirmed that Russia has no plans to place nuclear weapons in space. She also acknowledged that the failure to adopt the draft resolution does not affect Russia's existing obligations not to place nuclear weapons in outer space under the 1967 Outer Space Treaty.

If that is so, why did the United States and Japan introduce the draft resolution if it has no effect? That is how the United States Permanent Representative, with the cynicism typical of our American colleagues, explained it in a conversation with journalists on 24 April, following the voting in the Security Council. She directly indicated that Washington introduced the draft in order, supposedly, to expose Russia. But the United States has still not been able to explain in any clear way what it is it hopes to expose. Has it perhaps managed to come up with something by today's meeting, exposing that we wanted to adopt a document aimed at preventing an arms race in space? If so, the United States has exposed itself by showing that it has not been striving for that goal. Be that as it may, no matter what they invent in Washington, no matter what beautiful words they say, no one should have any doubt about the correctness of our actions in the Security Council.

To borrow football terminology, on 24 April our Western colleagues simply simulated a fall in the penalty area, earning a penalty in a highly dishonest manner. However, since their cunning and unfair play is obvious to the majority of those gathered in the Hall today, let us show them a red card in our speeches and by co-sponsoring our alternative draft resolution of the Security Council.

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

Mrs. Samson (European Union): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its member States. The candidate countries North Macedonia, Montenegro, Albania, Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Georgia, as well as San Marino, align themselves with this statement.

The EU welcomes efforts towards increasing the transparency and accountability of the Security Council, yet we strongly regret the use of the veto by Russia in the voting on draft resolution S/2024/302, proposed by Japan and the United States under the agenda item “Non-proliferation” on 24 April (see S/PV.9616).

That veto does not relieve Russia of its obligations under international law, including the Charter of the United Nations, the Outer Space Treaty and international humanitarian law. The EU reiterates the particular responsibility that the Security Council must fulfil in the maintenance of international peace and security. In that regard, the EU welcomes this opportunity for the General Assembly to debate the use of the veto and supports further strengthening the relationship between the General Assembly and the Security Council, including on matters related to the maintenance of international peace and security, consistent with the United Nations Charter.

The Outer Space Treaty and other applicable international law, including international humanitarian law, as well as the guiding principles developed in the United Nations framework, are the cornerstone of the global governance of outer space. The EU calls on all parties to act in line with the long-standing common objective of preventing an arms race in outer space. The draft resolution introduced by the United States and Japan recalled central obligations under the Outer Space Treaty, in particular those set out in article IV that obligate States parties not to place in orbit around the Earth any objects carrying nuclear weapons or any other kinds of weapons of mass destruction, install such weapons on celestial bodies or station such weapons in outer space in any other manner. The draft resolution went a step further by calling on Member States not to develop weapons of mass destruction specifically designed for that purpose.

Improving space security is paramount, as all States are increasingly reliant on space systems. The EU recalls that space science, applications and technologies play a vital role in tackling major global challenges, such as climate change, disaster management, food security, environmental protection, the efficient management of natural resources and transport development. They also boost the competitiveness of industry well beyond the space sector, thereby contributing to job creation and socioeconomic development worldwide.

Rising challenges and threats from outer space to our common security merit our full attention, including at the level of the Security Council. The EU is concerned about the multiplication of ambiguous, unfriendly or hostile activities in outer space and underlines the importance of addressing such developments promptly. In that context, the European Union is actively engaged in promoting a safe, secure and sustainable space environment and the peaceful use of outer space on an equitable and mutually acceptable basis for all, for present and future generations.

The EU and its Member States consider it important to jointly pursue and intensify efforts to address challenges in outer space, with the involvement of all United Nations Member States, and therefore remain fully engaged in constructive discussions regarding the prevention of threats in outer space.

Mr. Maes (Luxembourg) (*spoke in French*): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Benelux countries: Belgium, the Kingdom of the Netherlands and my own country, Luxembourg.

We fully align ourselves with the statement made by the observer of the European Union, as well as that to be made by the representative of New Zealand on behalf of a cross-regional group of countries. The Benelux countries would like to add the following in their national capacity.

First, on the importance of today’s debate, the Benelux countries are proud to have co-sponsored resolution 76/262, which was adopted by consensus on 26 April 2022, and which established a standing mandate for the General Assembly to hold a debate within 10 working days of the exercise of the veto in the Security Council. Resolution 76/262 is here to remind everyone that the veto is not a privilege, but a responsibility.

Indeed, a permanent seat on the Council comes with a great responsibility — that of working tirelessly

to achieve the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. In accordance with Article 24, paragraph 1, of the Charter, the Security Council acts on behalf of all Member States in exercising its mandate to maintain international peace and security. Today's debate is aimed in particular at reminding Russia, which has cast a new veto, that it will have to face all Member States. It will have to hear whether the Members agree that its use of the veto is, in fact, in the interest of international peace and security.

Secondly, on the implications of the Russian Federation's decision to veto draft resolution S/2024/302, the Benelux countries join others in expressing regret at Russia's use of the veto on the draft resolution proposed by the United States and Japan concerning outer space. The draft resolution enjoyed the transregional support of more than 60 Member States. With its veto, Russia has prevented an important step towards a safe, secure, stable and sustainable outer space, which is of vital importance to all, including Russia.

All States must fully comply with the Outer Space Treaty, including the obligation not to place in orbit around the Earth any objects carrying nuclear weapons or any other kind of weapons of mass destruction, install such weapons on celestial bodies or station such weapons in outer space in any other manner. We oppose the deployment of nuclear weapons and any other type of weapon of mass destruction in outer space, as well as developments related to that end, including because a nuclear explosion in outer space would have a devastating impact on sustainable development and on space services for civilians.

Thirdly, on preventing an arms race in outer space, developments in outer space are increasingly worrisome. Space is rapidly becoming a more crowded and contested domain. Preventing an arms race in outer space is more important than ever and is the responsibility of all. However, we do not believe that the Russian approach to preventing an arms race in outer space adequately meets the objective of building trust among States and ensuring security in and around outer space. We have been able to express our views on that issue in detail over the past years, including on the shortcomings of the proposed draft treaty on the prevention of the placement of weapons in outer space.

In contrast, the discussions that have continued in New York and Geneva have demonstrated the significant interest of States in finding convergent views on the different approaches to achieving the

objectives of preventing an arms race in outer space. Political commitments on responsible behaviour can be developed in support of and without prejudice to the search for legally binding measures and instruments. Those approaches are not mutually exclusive. In that context, we reiterate the applicability of international law, including the Charter of the United Nations, in outer space. We reaffirm that applicable international law also includes other relevant treaties, as well as customary international law, the law of State responsibility, international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

Mr. Tammsaar (Estonia): I deliver this statement on behalf of the Baltic States: Latvia, Lithuania and my own country, Estonia. We align ourselves with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union.

We regret that we have had to convene in the General Assembly for the second time within a month to discuss yet another Russian veto. Draft resolution S/2024/302, put forward by the United States and Japan, was intended to contribute to the peaceful use of outer space and to bolster global stability and security, with a special focus on the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons to outer space, in full accordance with the Outer Space Treaty, which Russia has joined. The draft resolution was supported by an overwhelming majority of 13 members of the Security Council and further sponsored by 65 Member States, including our countries.

Russia used its veto in complete isolation and in stark contrast to the interests of the global community. One can only speculate as to why the Russian Federation chose to veto a draft resolution promoting the continued peaceful uses of space. Reportedly, Russia plans to continue preparations and tests to deploy nuclear weapons in outer space. Russian incursions in space do not tend to have a happy ending for themselves, as the notorious Soviet attempt to weaponize outer space contributed to the collapse of the Soviet empire. In any case, Russia's veto was absolutely irresponsible, dangerous behaviour, leading to the further erosion of the global disarmament and non-proliferation architecture and seriously undermining global peace and security.

We urge the global community not to view the Russian veto in isolation. Russia's use of the veto to protect its own interest and chronic inconsistencies

between its words and actions provide a sinister track record. Let me highlight some examples.

First, Russia claims that its aggression against Ukraine is an act of self-defence aimed at saving civilians. In reality, Russia continues its aggression while occupying 18 per cent of Ukrainian territory, in complete disregard of the sacrosanct Charter of the United Nations. Moreover, Russia carries on systematic bombings of the civilians it claims to be saving. The consequences are harrowing. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights has verified over 10,500 civilian deaths and over 20,000 injuries. Some 40 per cent of the Ukrainian population are in need of humanitarian aid and up to third of the population has been displaced.

Secondly, Russia claims that its blocking of the extension of the mandate of the Panel of Experts of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1718 (2006), concerning the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, was caused by the lack of quality in the Panel's work, while vehemently denying growing military cooperation between Russia and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. In reality, the Panel of Experts confirmed not only numerous sea transfers between the two countries, in violation of relevant Security Council resolutions, but also documented debris of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's missiles used by Russia in Ukraine;

Last but not least, Russia claims to remain bound by its obligations under international law and outer space treaty. At the same time, there have been credible reports that Russia tested a direct-ascent anti-satellite missile that struck a Russian satellite and created a debris field in low-Earth orbit as early as in 2021. Furthermore, during the past year Russia has moved from selectively implementing its arms control obligations to the complete violation of near all of them. Russia withdrew from the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe and revoked its ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. The latest reports of Russia's use of chemical weapons in combat operations in Ukraine, violating the Chemical Weapons Convention, merely completes the picture.

Today Russia continues its dangerous and irresponsible nuclear sabre-rattling by announcing drills simulating the use of tactical nuclear weapons. The increasingly heavy track record of Russia's utter disregard for its international commitments, along with systematic and widespread actions undermining

the principles of the United Nations Charter, are not compatible with Russia's obligations as a permanent member of the Security Council. We condemn the continued dangerous and irresponsible nuclear sabre-rattling by Russia.

Finally, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania are determined to contribute to global efforts to strengthen international law and multilateralism, with the United Nations at its core, including through the strict implementation of existing disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation instruments. We fully respect the core principles of the Outer Space Treaty and continue to stand for the use of outer space for peaceful purposes, including by upholding the prohibition on the placement of nuclear weapons in outer space and opposing the development of nuclear weapons or other weapons of mass destruction specifically designed to be placed in outer space.

Ms. Lassen (Denmark): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Nordic countries: Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden and my own country, Denmark.

We thank you, Sir, for convening this debate following the veto cast by Russia in the Security Council on 24 April (see S/PV.9616). The Nordics co-sponsored resolution 76/262, on the veto initiative, and we continue to underline its importance as part of efforts to make the Council more transparent and accountable.

We regret Russia's unjustified use of the veto. It was the sixth veto cast in the Council during the first four months of this year alone. Russia's veto blocked a timely initiative by Japan and the United States that sought to reaffirm the obligation of States parties to the Outer Space Treaty not to place nuclear weapons in orbit around Earth. Upholding that obligation would help prevent an arms race in outer space and avert a grave danger for international peace and security, while promoting the peaceful exploration and uses of outer space. With its veto, Russia prevented the Security Council from fulfilling its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security.

Nuclear weapons in space would pose a significant threat to us all. It is our common goal to ensure that outer space is a safe, stable, secure and sustainable environment for all States. As a State party to the 1967 Outer Space Treaty, we expect Russia to act in conformity with that common goal. Draft resolution S/2024/302 underlined the existing commitments

under the Outer Space Treaty, which 115 countries have ratified, including the five permanent members of the Council, as well as our five Nordic countries. It reaffirmed the obligations of all State parties not to place any objects carrying nuclear weapons or other weapons of mass destruction in orbit around the Earth, or to station such weapons on celestial bodies or in outer space in any other manner. It sought to ensure that a nuclear device should never be developed for that purpose.

Upholding the commitments of the Outer Space Treaty is as important now as ever and is key to ensuring the common interest of all humankind in the exploration and use of outer space for peaceful purposes. The Nordics reaffirm the applicability of international law, including the Charter of the United Nations, the 1967 Outer Space Treaty and international humanitarian law, as well as the consensual voluntary principles developed within the United Nations framework for outer space. The veto does not relieve Russia of its obligations under international law, including the 1967 Outer Space Treaty. We continue to call on all States that have not yet done so to accede to the Treaty.

The Council does its work on behalf of all United Nations Member States. Its decisions affect us all and it should therefore be held accountable by us all. The founders of the Organization envisioned the veto power as a mechanism to foster consensus and prevent unilateral actions that could threaten global peace and stability. As a permanent member of the Council, Russia bears a special responsibility to exercise its veto in accordance with the letter and the spirit of the Charter.

Ms. Schwalger (New Zealand): I speak on behalf of a group of States committed to the implementation of resolution 76/262, otherwise known as the veto initiative: Andorra, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cabo Verde, Canada, Costa Rica, Denmark, Ecuador, Finland, Georgia, Germany, Ireland, Jamaica, Japan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Marshall Islands, Moldova, Myanmar, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Romania, San Marino, Singapore, Sweden, Timor-Leste, Ukraine and my own country, New Zealand.

We regret that the veto cast by the Russian Federation on the first-ever Security Council draft resolution on outer space (S/2024/302) overrode a text that was supported by 65 sponsors and received 13 votes in favour.

We welcome this opportunity for transparency and accountability on the casting of the veto through the implementation of the veto initiative. The veto is the most undemocratic element of the United Nations and it is arguably the single greatest source of criticism of the United Nations by the communities we serve. The casting of the veto by a single member or a small group of members stymies the majority of the Council from carrying out its functions on behalf of the wider United Nations membership.

We are steadfast in our belief that the General Assembly has a legitimate interest in and political responsibility to address situations where the use of the veto has prevented the Security Council from acting.

A peaceful, sustainable, safe and secure space environment is essential. We all rely on space-enabled capabilities, which provide a wide and growing range of critical capabilities, enable exciting research and help us find answers to many of our most confronting shared challenges. We also look to space to assist us in responding to crises and emergencies, such as extreme weather events and other natural disasters around the world. Central to that is support for measures to prevent an arms race in outer space and efforts to reduce the risk of conflict in space.

Importantly, the draft resolution urged all Member States to carry out space activities in full compliance with international law and to actively contribute to the objective of the peaceful use of outer space and of the prevention of an arms race in outer space. It also affirmed the obligations of all States parties to fully comply with the Outer Space Treaty, including not to place in orbit any nuclear weapons or weapons of mass destruction.

The draft resolution went beyond current commitments and also called on Member States not to develop nuclear weapons or any other kind of weapons of mass destruction specifically designed to be placed in orbit. That call would have contributed to the prevention of an arms race in outer space. The draft resolution would have complemented other ongoing discussions towards measures to prevent an arms race in outer space in disarmament forums.

The use of the veto presents a missed opportunity for the Security Council, on behalf of the United Nations membership, to exercise its leadership and responsibility and reaffirm key obligations and

principles under the Outer Space Treaty, international law and the Charter of the United Nations.

As members of the General Assembly, we will continue to exercise our collective political responsibility under the United Nations Charter to address matters of international peace and security. We call on the Council to act in accordance with its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. We encourage the Assembly to be ready to fill the gap left by the use of the veto by considering taking further actions where the Security Council has been prevented from acting by the veto.

I now wish to make a few remarks in my national capacity.

New Zealand is a long-standing opponent of the use of the veto. We have actively supported the veto initiative from its inception and remain a strong proponent of resolution 76/262. The resolution created a mechanism to ensure accountability among United Nations organs, in accordance with the Charter, and to ask permanent members of the Security Council that have cast a veto to explain themselves to the wider United Nations membership.

New Zealand was pleased to co-sponsor the first-ever Security Council draft resolution on outer space, alongside 64 other Member States. We emphasize that any breach of the Outer Space Treaty — including article IV, which prohibits the placement of nuclear weapons in orbit — would raise serious concerns. We call on all States to abide by their international commitments and to refrain from placing nuclear weapons into orbit or from developing the capability to do so.

As host to the fourth most frequent orbital space launches in the world, New Zealand takes its role as a gateway to space seriously and is committed to promoting the peaceful, safe and sustainable use of space. The peaceful use of space is fundamentally linked with respect for international law on Earth.

At its core, draft resolution S/2024/302 called on States not to develop nuclear weapons or other weapons of mass destruction specifically designed to be placed into orbit. The draft resolution emphasized the need for all Member States to carry out space activities in full compliance with existing international law, including the Outer Space Treaty, and it underlined the grave consequences of a nuclear detonation in space. The draft resolution further highlighted the importance of preventing an arms race in outer space and of

advancing space science and technology. Any conflict in space could put into jeopardy the systems we rely on for so many purposes. Importantly, the draft resolution also complemented discussions taking place in other multilateral forums.

It is for those reasons that we regret Russia's exercise of the veto on the draft resolution. The draft resolution was subject to extensive negotiations, and in our view the veto represents a missed opportunity for the Security Council to support measures to prevent an arms race in outer space. We call on the Council to fulfil its primary responsibility to maintain peace and security and to reaffirm key obligations and principles under the Outer Space Treaty, international law and the United Nations.

Mr. Vasconcelos (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): The use and exploration of outer space must be carried out in the interests of all States, regardless of their size, power or wealth. That access must be based on the principles of cooperation and mutual assistance, recognizing the growing relevance of outer space as a tool for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

Space technologies play a crucial role in the fight against climate change, disaster management, agriculture, education and health, among others. It is our collective responsibility to ensure that outer space remains accessible and beneficial to all, especially developing countries and those with fewer space capabilities.

Unfortunately, outer space is increasingly being used in ways that are contrary to international peace and security. Despite the great consensus of the international community on the need to preserve peaceful uses of space, how can it then be considered by some countries as a viable and legitimate scenario for confrontation? Mexico regrets that the use of the veto has once again prevented the construction of a clear understanding within the Security Council on the prohibition of the development of nuclear weapons that could be placed in outer space.

The 1967 Outer Space Treaty is clear in prohibiting the placement of nuclear weapons in space and on celestial bodies, and therefore must be complied with without ambiguity. Mexico does not accept the placement of any weapon, particularly weapons of mass destruction, in outer space. The international community should not be concerned about the development of a specific nuclear weapons system. We

must reject all types of weapons of mass destruction, regardless of their classification or location.

Regarding the substantive content of the vetoed draft resolution S/2024/302 — the prohibition of nuclear weapons in outer space — Mexico believes that the text could have been strengthened to comprehensively reflect the prevention of an arms race in outer space. However, it must be said that the draft resolution contained elements of great relevance in a context of serious geopolitical tensions and a possible escalation of conflicts to the nuclear threshold. In that regard, a statement by the Security Council that “nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought” would have been of great significance. It certainly would have been a strong statement, and we demand that the countries possessing nuclear weapons abide by it.

The text of the draft resolution also included a clear description of the consequences of a nuclear detonation and its long-term negative repercussions. Mexico believes that the humanitarian and ecological consequences of any nuclear detonation, whether on Earth or in outer space, are sufficient reason to call for the total abolition of such weapons. A strong statement by the Security Council in that regard would have been indispensable.

Even though the Security Council missed a valuable opportunity to adopt such a text, preventing an arms race in outer space is of existential interest to the entire international community and all future generations. It must therefore continue to be a priority of the United Nations. In that regard, Mexico insists on the urgent need to establish a legally binding instrument so that no actor, be it a State or a private entity, can place weapons of any nature or under any circumstances in outer space. We must preserve outer space for exclusively peaceful purposes and remember that it belongs not to a nation or a group of nations, but to humankind as a whole.

As an active member of the international community and committed to the promotion and observance of international law, Mexico will continue to work to ensure that outer space remains an area of cooperation and not of conflict.

Mr. De Rivi re (France) (*spoke in French*): France deplores Russia’s veto of draft resolution S/2024/302, on outer space, which the United States and Japan had submitted to the Security Council. France is one of the 13 members of the Council that voted in favour of the

draft. It is one of the 65 States from all regional groups that chose to sponsor it.

The text recalled above all the principles of international law that govern the use of outer space, and in that way it would have contributed to maintaining international peace and security. It underlined the crucial importance of the 1967 Outer Space Treaty, which is the foundation of international space law and promotes the uses and exploration of space for peaceful purposes. Russia is a party to it and is even its depositary. The draft resolution recalled the prohibition set out in the Treaty on placing objects carrying weapons of mass destruction in outer space. It called on States not to develop weapons of mass destruction that would be specifically designed to be deployed, in violation of the Treaty, in outer space.

We cannot help but wonder about the reasons that led Russia to block the draft resolution, the main purpose of which was to reaffirm the obligations it undertook when ratifying the 1967 Treaty. Its opposition to recalling the provisions of a treaty to which it is a party reinforces our concerns about Russia’s compliance with its international obligations. That position does not contribute to lending credibility to its plan for a new treaty preventing the placement of weapons in outer space.

We cannot be convinced by Russia’s explanation that the draft resolution was incomplete, since it did not promote its proposal for a treaty on preventing the placement of weapons in outer space. Russia is substituting the use of the veto for negotiation. The draft resolution supported the objective of preventing an arms race in outer space. It stressed the need to develop new measures to that end and recognized the role of the Conference on Disarmament in that regard. The text was not intended to go into the details of proposals that do not currently enjoy consensus. It is primarily the role of specialized bodies, such as the Conference on Disarmament or the First Committee, to consider such proposals. It is regrettable that Russia seized on that argument to block the adoption of the text, which enjoyed the support of the other States members of the Council.

France will remain committed to ensuring that the Security Council continues to assume its responsibilities by supporting the international disarmament and non-proliferation architecture. It intends to continue to promote the implementation and universalization

of the 1967 Treaty, which is an essential component of that architecture.

In the General Assembly and within the Conference on Disarmament, France will continue to support work aimed at consolidating the legal regime applicable to outer space so that it remains safe, stable, preserved and sustainable for the good of all States.

Ms. Del Águila Castillo (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me to thank you, Sir, for convening this debate to discuss the use of the veto regarding draft resolution S/2024/302, on the use of weapons of mass destruction in outer space. Introduced by Japan and the United States, the draft resolution would have promoted the shared objective of preventing an arms race in outer space, promoting exploration for peaceful ends and stressing the need to take firm measures towards a political and legal commitment to working on a legally binding document on that topic.

To that end, my delegation would like to highlight Article 1 of the Charter of the United Nations, which establishes one of its aims:

“To maintain international peace and security, and to that end: to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace, and for the suppression of acts of aggression or other breaches of the peace, and to bring about by peaceful means, and in conformity with the principles of justice and international law, adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations which might lead to a breach of the peace.”

We are here today for the sixth time at the seventy-eighth session to discuss crucial elements that have a direct impact on the future of humankind and global stability, and which nevertheless continue to be vetoed in the one of the main organs of the institution — the Security Council.

Guatemala recognizes the necessity of maintaining outer space as an environment free of weapons of mass destruction and the imperative need to promote scientific space research with exclusively peaceful ends. In that regard and in line with this position, we recognize the relevance of any initiative to that end that could help to safeguard the principles and objectives to which our country aspires, including maintaining international peace and security.

It is undeniable that outer space is the common heritage of humankind, a vast expanse that extends beyond national borders and should be safeguarded as a sanctuary of peace. The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction in that context would not only pose an unimaginable threat to our planet, but also imperil the stability of future exploration and space activities. Moreover, scientific research in space has the potential to provide us with invaluable knowledge and technological progress that could be used for the benefit of all humankind. Space science could open doors to a more prosperous future in harmony with a development environment to the benefit of all States, independent of their level of social, economic or scientific development.

Unfortunately, we are facing a context that is characterized by a clear lack of political commitment, which has resulted in paralysis for proposals to promote international security and disarmament. That inaction jeopardizes not only our security today, but also our legacy to future generations. The time has come to move from words to action, to launch a constructive dialogue and generate synergies to advance the disarmament architecture and break the current stalemate. We must join forces to overcome geopolitical differences and prioritize collective well-being over individual interests or national interests.

Finally, Guatemala reiterates the importance of preserving outer space as a place of peace, and we recognize the fundamental role of the Security Council's resolutions in the field of disarmament and international security. We also urge that negotiations on reform of the Security Council be pursued with the aim of finding responses to the challenges we face in our fight for full, verifiable, transparent and irreversible nuclear disarmament within clearly established timelines and subject to adequate international control.

Mr. Yamazaki (Japan): I ask my colleagues to imagine what would happen with a detonation of a nuclear weapon in outer space. A large number of satellites and other critical space infrastructure would be taken down. The consequences would be disastrous and irreversible and would not be limited to outer space. The repercussions would also affect people's lives and obstruct sustainable development in every region on Earth, disastrously and irreversibly.

The Security Council draft resolution on weapons of mass destruction in outer space (S/2024/302), co-authored by the United States and Japan, was

intended to avoid such a nuclear catastrophe for humankind. Japan is disappointed by the use of the veto by the Russian Federation (see S/PV.9616). Thirteen Council members voted in favour. Sixty-five United Nations Member States sponsored the draft resolution.

Regrettably, one permanent member decided to silence the critical message we wanted to send to the present and future people of the world, that outer space must remain a domain free of weapons of mass destruction. Its use of the veto casts serious doubt on Russia's commitment to the peaceful use and exploration of outer space and the fundamental principles enshrined in the Outer Space Treaty. The veto is yet another example of the same permanent member's disrespect for the global non-proliferation regime. Such irresponsible action once again discredits the Security Council, which bears the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security.

Despite that disappointing result, the placement of nuclear weapons or any other weapon of mass destruction must never be allowed in outer space. Japan categorically opposes the development of any type of weapon of mass destruction for such purposes. Preventing nuclear weapons or any other weapon of mass destruction in outer space must remain our priority and should be pursued by all United Nations Member States, including the permanent member that blocked the draft resolution. Outer space must never be an arena for a nuclear arms race. Outer space must remain a domain of peace, hope and prosperity.

Mr. Akram (Pakistan): The General Assembly is meeting pursuant to its resolution 76/262, which mandates the President of the General Assembly to convene a meeting when a veto is cast in the Security Council. The vetoed draft resolution S/2024/302 addresses an issue of global concern, an issue that impinges on the security of all States and peoples.

Threats to security in and from outer space have escalated sharply in recent years. That is evident from the placement of weapons in space and its increasing characterization as the next war-fighting frontier in the military policies and doctrines of major Powers. The deployment of missile defence systems and their amalgamation with outer space satellite systems is reinforcing offensive and defensive capabilities, with severe implications for strategic stability. Anti-satellite weapons are being complemented by non-kinetic capabilities. With modern warfare increasingly reliant on space-based technologies, there is significant risk

that conflicts on land, sea and air will spill over into outer space.

The United States-Japan draft resolution rightly recognized that the prevention of an arms race in outer space would avert a grave danger to international peace and security. It underscored the importance of the Outer Space Treaty and reiterated that the Conference on Disarmament was the sole multilateral disarmament negotiating forum.

If nuclear weapons were deployed in outer space, that would indeed constitute a violation of the Outer Space Treaty, but we are told that the information available regarding the alleged deployment of nuclear weapons in outer space does not indicate an imminent deployment of such weapons. Thus, there is time to establish the veracity of that information and to avert any move to deploy such weapons in outer space. We can do so in the relevant forums, particularly the Conference on Disarmament, which since 1992 has had the item "Prevention of an arms race in outer space" on its agenda. Furthermore, while the deployment of non-nuclear weapons may not explicitly violate the Outer Space Treaty, it does violate the universal desire of all peoples to prevent the weaponization of outer space and to reverse its militarization, which has already taken place.

Pakistan has always maintained a principled position that resolutions and proposals on global disarmament issues should be deliberated and concluded in an inclusive and transparent manner within the appropriate forums — that is, the Conference on Disarmament, the United Nations Disarmament Commission and the First Committee.

It is regrettable that there has been no progress on a treaty to prevent an arms race in outer space for over four decades. Initially, some dismissed the possibility of an arms race in outer space; then they argued that it was too late to prevent its militarization and called for focusing on non-weaponization measures. Now they want to concentrate on behaviour rather than capabilities, ignoring the inherent risks of legitimizing the weaponization of outer space.

Pakistan advocates a comprehensive approach, with a dual focus on both capabilities and behaviour. We have consistently advocated urgent negotiations on a legally binding instrument on the prevention of an arms race in outer space. Concurrently, we have also actively contributed to non-legally binding measures, such

as transparency and confidence-building measures. However, the evident gaps in the international legal regime cannot be filled by such confidence-building measures or other non-legally binding norms.

It is regrettable, therefore, that a few States continue to block the start of negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament on a legally binding instrument that prohibits the placement of weapons in outer space and outlaws the threat or use of force against outer space objects. They cite definitional and verification-related issues without explaining how such negotiations would undermine their security interests. They have also failed to justify why definitional and verification issues cannot be taken up during the negotiations, as they have advocated for other issues in the Conference on Disarmament.

We hope, therefore, that the issue of the weaponization of outer space, which has been raised in the Security Council, will be transmitted to the Conference on Disarmament for further consideration within the context of negotiations on a treaty to prevent an arms race in outer space,

Mr. Rahimi Majd (Islamic Republic of Iran): The Islamic Republic of Iran reaffirms its unwavering commitment to the principles outlined in the Charter of the United Nations and the international legal framework governing the activities of States in the exploration and use of outer space. Our position on outer space has been consistent and clear. We believe that outer space is the common heritage of all humankind and must be used, explored and utilized for exclusively peaceful purposes and for the benefit of all countries, irrespective of their degree of economic or scientific development and without discrimination of any kind.

For more than four decades, the Conference on Disarmament (CD), in accordance with paragraph 80 of the final document of the tenth special session of the General Assembly (resolution S/10/2), has been mandated to launch appropriate international negotiations in order to prevent an arms race in outer space, based on the spirit of the Outer Space Treaty. In that regard, all States with major space capabilities have a special responsibility to contribute positively and actively to the objective of the exclusively peaceful uses of outer space and the prevention of an arms race in outer space.

Iran, while deeply concerned over the increasing threat of the weaponization of outer space, reiterates the

importance and urgency of preventing an armed race in outer space (PAROS) and has consistently supported the start of negotiations on a comprehensive and legally binding instrument on PAROS in the CD. Matters related to space activities, including safety, security and stability, should be thoroughly discussed and analysed within the scope of international specialized bodies under United Nations auspices. That notably includes the Conference on Disarmament and the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space. Any initiatives on PAROS should be multilateral, transparent, open, non-discriminatory and comprehend.

That is why Iran believes that the Conference on Disarmament is the right place to start negotiations on PAROS and has supported the draft treaty on the prevention of the placement of weapons in outer space and of the threat or use of force against outer space objects, presented by China and the Russian Federation, as a basis for the establishment of an ad hoc committee to negotiate the legally binding treaty in the CD.

Against that backdrop, we strongly condemn the instrumental and political exploitation of United Nations institutions and bodies, notably the Security Council. The long-awaited mandate of the CD should not be converted into a political agenda of the Security Council. Such a move would downgrade the noble agenda of the CD on PAROS, as well as the objectives of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space.

Iran emphasizes the imperative of restoring the principle of multilateralism and striving for consensus on diverse issues through relevant specialized institutions, with the active participation of all member countries being paramount. Furthermore, we consider that the introduction by the United States and Japan of the draft resolution outlined in document S/2024/302 reflected an unbalanced, political and selective approach towards international treaties and conventions. It failed to fully reflect all United Nations Member States' comments on interest concerns and positions.

The amendment to the draft resolution proposed by China and the Russian Federation (S/2024/323) aligned precisely with the long-standing mandate of preventing an armed race of all types of weapons in outer space through the early elaboration of a verifiable, legally binding multilateral agreement. It was aimed at addressing significant gaps and shortcomings within the draft resolution. Unfortunately, the United States did not accept the amendment, once again standing

against the international community's aspirations to prevent an armed race in outer space.

If the United States genuinely valued addressing the critical issue of the weaponization of outer space, it would refrain from single-handedly impeding progress within the United Nations disarmament machinery on that front. The United States views outer space as a potential battleground, as evidenced by the establishment of the Space Force and Space Command and the integration of commercial space enterprises into its space combat systems. The adoption of a biased and self-serving approach by certain Western nations, particularly the United States, towards international treaties and conventions, such as the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, undermines the credibility of its disarmament and non-proliferation efforts.

The Islamic Republic of Iran, as a nation that has suffered from the use of weapons of mass destruction, along with numerous others, asserts that the only absolute guarantee against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons is their total elimination. Regrettably, the nuclear-weapon States have not only failed to fulfil their disarmament commitments under the nuclear non-proliferation Treaty, but also persist in maintaining, enhancing and modernizing their nuclear capabilities. We reaffirm that achieving a nuclear-free world depends on the comprehensive, effective, balanced and non-discriminatory implementation of the three pillars of disarmament, non-proliferation and peaceful nuclear energy use within the nuclear non-proliferation Treaty.

Achieving that goal requires the unwavering commitment of all Member States to fulfilling their obligations, especially concerning nuclear disarmament. The persistent lack of concrete progress in that effort largely arises from the reluctance of the nuclear-weapon States to meet their treaty obligations. Their ongoing possession and upkeep of nuclear arsenals under various justifications present the most significant threat to global peace and security.

Ms. Chan Valverde (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): A new veto has prevented the Security Council from reaffirming the commitments of the States parties to the Outer Space Treaty. The vetoed draft resolution S/2024/302 underlines questions that we as States have highlighted as being important and priority matters upon which the international community should reach common understanding with great urgency. Those matters include the scope of effective verification

of space activities and the placing of weapons in outer space. That was the theme of the two groups of governmental experts that met in 2019 and 2024, respectively. That concern led to the presentation in the Conference on Disarmament, in 2008 and in 2014, of the draft treaty on the prevention of the placement of weapons in outer space and of the threat or use of force against outer space objects. The inclusion of those two points in the vetoed draft resolution accentuates the need for the international community to continue working to reach common understanding on those matters for space security.

With that preamble, allow me to make the following points.

First, this veto is another clear example of the current crisis in the Security Council, resulting from rising geopolitical tension and competition among the permanent members. However, in that same context, States must strive to work together so as to guarantee that outer space remains a peaceful environment and to reaffirm the obligation under the Treaty of not placing nuclear weapons in orbit. That means that neither such weapons nor their vectors will be developed.

Secondly, Costa Rica reaffirms the importance of respecting international law, and in particular articles III and IV of the Outer Space Treaty on the applicability of international law to outer space and the prohibition of placing, installing or stationing weapons of mass destruction in orbit around Earth. Costa Rica calls on all States to declare and reaffirm their willingness to comply with the existing legal framework, whether it be through resolutions, statements or unilateral commitments, in promoting trust and thereby strengthening that framework.

Thirdly, it is crucial to avoid an arms race in outer space, which would further exacerbate existing tensions on Earth. Costa Rica calls upon States not to act against the prevention of an arms race in outer space and the existing legal framework for outer space, which has been built upon initiatives presented by many States from all regions, from General Assembly resolutions to draft treaties and statements in the context of groups of governmental experts, to cite just a few examples.

Finally, Costa Rica regrets the challenges in abiding by international treaties linked to weapons of mass destruction through consultative processes and mechanisms. That underlines the increasingly serious crisis in the international arms control mechanism

and regime. Costa Rica calls on all relevant parties to enter into constructive dialogue to implement the mechanisms on existing weapons and to urgently initiate negotiations towards new agreements. In that regard, it is clear to Costa Rica that the mandate of not placing weapons of mass destruction in orbit could in the future be broadened to include other types of weapons that currently are not considered explicitly in the Outer Space Treaty — all with a view to guaranteeing that States can carry out space activities and keeping the interests of others in mind without any form of discrimination, on an equal footing and pursuant to international law.

Adopted in 1967, the Outer Space Treaty is the cornerstone of international space law. It guides the exploration and use of outer space for peaceful ends, prohibits the placement of nuclear weapons or other weapons of mass destruction in outer space, and establishes guidelines for the use of celestial bodies. For Costa Rica, each and every one of the provisions of the Treaty are valid, and we urge all States parties to abide by its obligations.

Mr. Agyeman (Ghana): Ghana regrets that the Security Council could not find the will to reflect in a consensual manner its views on contemporary issues relating to outer space, for which 115 Member States have agreed a treaty to govern its exploration and use. We are particularly distressed because since 1967 the broad agreement reached on the question of outer space has been that placing nuclear weapons or weapons of mass destruction (WMD) in outer space is banned and that the establishment of military bases or installations, as well as the testing of any type of weapon or the conduct of military exercises on the moon and other celestial bodies, is prohibited.

The fact that the Council could not express the international legal position on outer space evenly gives much cause for concern, especially in relation to the activities of States with major space capabilities that also pursue efforts at military superiority and dominance. In that regard, it is Ghana's view that as the Council proceeds with such concerns, it should do so with our common aspiration in mind and in the inherent interest of all humankind to prevent the installation of nuclear weapons or WMD, the testing of any military weapon or the conduct of military exercises in outer space. The Council's engagements on outer space should therefore strive for balanced and comprehensive reflections that can promote universal commitments

to peace, security and cooperation among all nations, mindful of the complexities of modern space activities.

To be clear, outer space should never be an arena for militarization, whether in testing weapons, in conducting military exercises or in installing nuclear or other weapons of mass destruction. Ghana reiterates its view that being the province of our common humanity, outer space should not be explored or used in a manner inconsistent with our avowed commitment to peaceful purposes. Indeed, outer space is not subject to national appropriation and sovereignty, and it is Ghana's view that ownership and management of military assets should perforce be exercised only in national jurisdictions. Under no circumstances, therefore, should some States contemplate a superior right to the shared commons of our humanity and proceed in a direction that jeopardizes peace and security for all.

Ghana therefore rejects all notions that justify the militarization and weaponization of outer space and will condemn any verifiable incidence of violation by any State party of its binding obligations on outer space. We urge increased transparency and the rebuilding of trust among major space nations to consolidate the common aspiration of humankind for the peaceful uses of outer space.

Our common and unified efforts should be devoted to the deployment of space resources to enhance civilian well-being, including through communications systems, global navigation, monitoring and early warning mechanisms, and the many other useful purposes to which space technology can be put. We believe also that there is a need to strengthen the current legal framework, enhance international cooperation and to develop further norms and regulations to prevent the potential for conflicts in space through real or perceived threats of military imbalances. We must therefore reinvigorate our efforts under the relevant agenda item of the Conference on Disarmament.

I conclude by urging a holistic approach to addressing peace in outer space within the appropriate universal forum and in a manner that can enhance peace, security and cooperation for the benefit of all nations.

Mr. Mythen (Ireland): Ireland aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union, and I make these additional remarks in my national capacity.

Ireland deeply regrets the Russian Federation's veto of the Security Council draft resolution S/2024/302,

proposed by the United States and Japan under the item “Non-proliferation”, regarding the non-placement of nuclear weapons in outer space. It brings to five the number of vetoes in just four months of this year, already equalling the total for the entirety of 2023. That reflects the wholesale instrumentalization of the Council for various national interests. Using the Council in that way runs contrary to its purpose and further jeopardizes international peace and security for us all.

On the present issue regarding the non-placement of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in outer space, the veto by a permanent member is unjustifiable. The overwhelming support for the draft resolution, with 13 votes in favour and 1 abstention, speaks to the critical need acknowledged by all Member States to preserve a secure and sustainable space environment. It is imperative for Ireland that we preserve the use of outer space on an equitable basis for all. The draft resolution would have contributed positively to that endeavour.

The need for urgent action on outer space security has become acute, as the spectre of threats in that domain has increased, with grave implications for billions of people on Earth. Those implications are not just hypothetical, nor was the draft resolution simply symbolic. It is important to acknowledge the realities that underlie that obstruction. In particular, we now understand the immensely destructive power that a nuclear weapon would have if detonated in orbit, not least on the functioning satellites, with further unpredictable consequences.

In 1967, when the Outer Space Treaty was negotiated, 159 objects were launched into space worldwide. Last year, over 2,000 such objects were launched. Despite the exponential increase in space launches, fewer than half of United Nations Member States have a satellite in orbit. Nonetheless, all Member States are reliant on the thousands of active satellites for everyday services and systems essential to preserving the well-being of all our citizens. Satellites and other space-based assets underpin our critical civilian infrastructure, including food supply, water, electricity, sanitation, waste management, telecommunications and health care, as well as the functioning of our global economy. The development and deployment of a nuclear weapon in orbit would pose a catastrophic threat, especially to satellites in a society now dependent on them for

survival and prosperity. To permit that possibility is simply unacceptable.

The Outer Space Treaty, to which all permanent members of the Security Council are party, already prohibits the placement of such weapons into orbit for that very reason. Ireland welcomed the strong reaffirmation of the Treaty’s article IV commitments in the vetoed draft resolution. The draft resolution’s further call on States to refrain from developing nuclear weapons or weapons of mass destruction specifically designed to be placed in orbit or stationed in outer space should be universally supported. The fact that the Security Council cannot agree to that is deeply concerning. It calls into question the commitment to the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation framework of those who refused to support it.

The Outer Space Treaty, along with the Charter of the United Nations, international humanitarian law and the consensual principles developed in the United Nations framework, remain the cornerstone of the global governance of outer space. The fact that the core of the regime was agreed at the height of the Cold War demonstrates that with political will, common understandings on the security of outer space can be achieved in challenging international security contexts. Without excluding the possibility of the development of further legally binding agreements, Ireland believes that voluntary measures are the pragmatic way forward in preventing an arms race and the placement of any weapons in outer space today. That is an approach centred on agreed norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviour.

The vetoed draft resolution would have been a very clear and very positive step in that regard. It would have served as a crucial confidence-building measure, a common norm affirmed by the Security Council at a time when it is critically needed. Despite that setback, Ireland remains fully committed to preserving outer space as a safe and secure global commons for the use and benefit of all, as well as to the complete, verifiable and irreversible elimination of all nuclear weapons.

Mr. Fu Cong (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): Outer space is the global commons and holds the shared dreams of all humankind. Its peaceful uses, enhanced cooperation and improved governance are the shared aspirations of all countries and the general trend of the times.

Meanwhile, the world today is not at peace. The risk of outer space weaponization is on the rise. The rights of developing countries to access space science and technology have been restricted. The shortcomings of the existing system of governance are gradually emerging and there are unprecedented challenges to the peaceful uses of outer space. In order to effectively ensure that the development and utilization of outer space benefit all Member States, the international community should make the following efforts.

First, it should firmly preserve the peaceful nature of outer space. At present, the greatest challenge in outer space lies in one super-Power seeking hegemony there, defining outer space as a war-fighting domain, accelerating the building of outer space forces, developing and deploying offensive outer space weapons, and building a military alliance there, which has seriously undermined the peaceful nature of outer space and increased the risk of military miscalculation and conflicts. The international community should uphold a common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security concept, resolutely oppose the weaponization of, or an arms race in, outer space and avoid turning outer space into a new battlefield. That big Power should play an exemplary role in abandoning the mindset and the policy of pursuing absolute security and dominance and take practical actions to safeguard peace and security in outer space.

Secondly, international cooperation should accelerate the improvement of the international space governance system. The 1967 Outer Space Treaty is the cornerstone of the existing international space order and has played a positive role in safeguarding the peaceful nature of outer space and regulating space behaviours. However, it has been over half a century since the Treaty was concluded and, as the situation develops, it is gradually becoming outdated. For example, the Treaty prohibits only the deployment of weapons of mass destruction in outer space, but not other types of weapons. The international community urgently needs to negotiate and conclude a new outer space treaty to provide a more solid institutional foundation for outer space security. As early as 2008, China and Russia submitted to the Conference on Disarmament a draft treaty on outer space that was widely recognized and supported by the international community and can serve as the basis for future negotiations.

Thirdly, we must ensure that all countries share the dividends of outer space. All countries, regardless

of their size and level of development, can become participants in, beneficiaries of and contributors to the peaceful uses of outer space. The international community should actively carry out cooperation in space, communications, navigation and meteorology, and jointly promote the development of the space applications industry so as to promote technological progress, economic growth, livelihood improvement and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in all countries. The major countries in space technology applications have the responsibility to provide more space-related public goods so that more countries can enjoy the dividends of the peaceful uses of outer space. A certain country should stop generalizing the concept of national security and wantonly suppressing the scientific research and technological development of other countries. On the contrary, it should create conditions for international exchanges and cooperation in the field of outer space.

Fourthly, we need to discuss outer space governance in a spirit of consultation and inclusiveness. As outer space issues are highly technical and specialized, the Conference on Disarmament, the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, the First Committee and other specialized platforms should perform their respective duties with complementarity so as to jointly improve outer space governance. The Security Council, on the basis of its own mandate, can consider as appropriate the issue of outer space security, but should reflect as much as possible the consensus of the international community and provide support and complementarity to the discussions on specialized platforms.

The draft resolution on outer space security previously proposed by the United States and Japan in the Council (S/2024/302) is neither comprehensive nor balanced, and China is not in a position to support it. The Russian Federation has recently submitted a new draft resolution to the Council that is more comprehensive and balanced. China supports that draft resolution and looks forward to early agreement among Council members so as to jointly safeguard mutual trust and cooperation among all parties on the issue of outer space.

Outer space belongs to all humankind and bears on the security and well-being of all Member States. All countries should work together to turn outer space into a new frontier for mutually beneficial cooperation and progress, rather than an arena of

rivalry and confrontations. China will work with the international community to further deepen exchanges and cooperation in outer space, advance outer space governance and make efforts and contributions to safeguarding security in outer space, promoting the peaceful uses of outer space and building a community with a shared future for humankind.

Mr. Camilleri (Malta): Malta aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union. I would also like to make some remarks in my national capacity.

As the General Assembly convenes for another veto debate, Malta reiterates its strong support for this initiative. However, we must also note that the frequency of these debates is regrettable and concerning. We thank Japan and the United States for presenting their draft resolution on weapons of mass destruction in outer space (S/2024/302). We recognize and appreciate their efforts to accommodate the views of all Council members towards achieving consensus. Unfortunately, those efforts have faced yet another veto by a permanent member. Moreover, the use of the veto on a text that reaffirmed existing legal obligations risks further undermining the global non-proliferation and disarmament architecture.

Malta supported the idea of the Security Council reaffirming the principles of the Outer Space Treaty, including article IV, which obligates States parties,

“not to place in orbit around the earth any objects carrying nuclear weapons or any other kinds of weapons of mass destruction”.

That includes also article IX, which provides that States parties “shall be guided by the principle of co-operation and mutual assistance”.

In the same vein, we supported the draft resolution. As space capabilities continue to increase, we are firmly convinced that the Security Council has an important role to play in addressing those threats to international peace and security. At the same time, as a State party to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, we emphasize our principled position against all nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction, not only those deployed in outer space. Those weapons constitute an unacceptable threat to our existence and must be eliminated.

Malta continues to support discussions on outer space in all relevant forums, including the Conference

on Disarmament, the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space and the First Committee. We stress that the draft resolution did not prejudice any of those processes. By failing to adopt it, the Council has simply missed a timely opportunity to advance our efforts to maintain international peace and security.

In conclusion, we reiterate our commitment to ensuring that outer space remains a peaceful domain for the benefit of all humankind. We will continue to engage constructively towards that goal.

Mrs. Baeriswyl (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): Ensuring the peaceful, safe and sustainable use of outer space contributes to our security and prosperity. It is in the interest of all States. Any threat in that area can have major consequences for international peace and security. Preserving space to take advantage of the opportunities it offers is therefore the responsibility not only of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space and other specifically created bodies, but also of the Security Council.

It is appropriate that the Council should take up the issue of space security in view of the growing challenges in that field. Draft resolution S/2024/302, proposed by Japan and the United States, contained important elements for meeting those challenges. The reaffirmation of existing obligations under international law, the assertion that “a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought”, and the proscription of the development of weapons of mass destruction specifically designed to be placed in space would have been important measures in that regard.

The use of the veto by a permanent member represents a missed opportunity. Switzerland deeply regrets it. It was the fifth time this year that one or two delegations have used a veto to block a draft resolution. Its use undermines the very legitimacy of the Security Council and prevents it from fulfilling its mandate. Switzerland stresses that, despite the veto, all provisions of the Outer Space Treaty remain binding on the States parties. We call on all States that have not yet done so to accede to the Treaty.

Approaches considered by some to be antinomic are being promoted in the field of space security. Switzerland considers them to be complementary. The main goal is to prevent any military confrontation in space, which requires the adoption of binding measures concerning the prohibition of the placement of weapons in space, as well as behaviour-based measures. In that

respect, we support the development of legally binding norms. Political measures are also important and can be a first step in that direction.

In that sense, the draft resolution was a step in the right direction. We appreciate the transparency and inclusiveness shown by Japan and the United States in the negotiations, and the fact that many of our proposals were taken into account. The flexibility they showed and the compromises they made motivated Switzerland to support the proposal as presented by its authors.

Let me conclude by expressing our deep concern about the unravelling of certain parts of the global disarmament and non-proliferation architecture. The pact for the future thus represents an important milestone that can draw inspiration from the recommendations made by the Secretary-General on the elimination of nuclear weapons and the prevention of conflicts in outer space. Switzerland will continue to work within the relevant forums, including the Security Council, to rebuild trust among States.

Mr. De La Gasca (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank you, Sir, for convening this meeting in compliance with the provisions of resolution 76/262, due to the veto exercised by the Russian Federation in the Security Council on 24 April (see S/PV.9616) when considering draft resolution S/2024/302, submitted by the delegation of Japan and the United States, on weapons of mass destruction in outer space.

In the case at hand, as established in the first part of paragraph 3 of Article 27 of the Charter, it is regrettable that once again the Council was unable to adopt a decision that enjoyed the majority support of its members, due to the use of the undemocratic privilege of the veto. I emphasize that the draft resolution sought to reaffirm existing commitments under the 1967 Outer Space Treaty, urging all States not to develop or deploy nuclear weapons or other weapons of mass destruction specifically designed to be placed in outer space.

The placement of nuclear weapons or other weapons of mass destruction in outer space would have catastrophic and unpredictable consequences. Not only would it put life on the planet at risk, but it would also threaten critical infrastructure in outer space. Ecuador values and defends the exclusively peaceful use of outer space and opposes its anarchization and even more so its militarization, which includes the deployment of any type of weaponry. On several occasions and in several forums, Ecuador has expressed its clear position that we

should refrain not only from militarizing outer space but also from politicizing it. Therefore, it is urgent to move forward with the negotiation of legally binding agreements in order to preserve the peaceful nature of outer space and prevent an arms race in all its aspects.

The United Nations was founded on the principles of multilateralism and international cooperation. Those principles are essential to addressing global challenges, such as total and absolute disarmament in outer space. We must work together to strengthen existing regimes and address emerging gaps and challenges in that area. I therefore call on all Member States to reaffirm their commitment to non-proliferation and total disarmament in outer space.

In conclusion, I reiterate my delegation's belief that the mechanism created by resolution 76/262 contributes to accountability and transparency, as well as to strengthening the authority of the General Assembly and its relationship with the Security Council, thereby strengthening the United Nations system.

Ms. Dhanutirto (Indonesia): Each and every one of us is a beneficiary of a peaceful outer space. Each and every one of us stands to lose if we do not preserve outer space as a common heritage of humankind. The fundamental question that we face today is: How do we progress towards a stable regime for space governance, which requires reducing fragmentations over issues of outer space security, not only in the Security Council but also in other forums, including here in the Assembly? The Council's inability to adopt draft resolution S/2024/302 should serve as an opportunity to reconcile different divergences instead of amplifying them. To that end, allow me to underline two points.

First, this meeting should lead to ensuring an inclusive discussion on outer space security. We welcome any follow-up steps to be taken in the Council to revive the discussion on peaceful uses of outer space. The Council's unified voice against any weaponization of outer space would speak volumes about a safer and more secure world.

Secondly, this meeting must lay the foundation for progress in other outer space security deliberations. We must strive to address the threats to outer space in a comprehensive manner, not only from those of weapons of mass destruction, but from all types of weapons. We therefore must not stop at regretting the failure of the Council. We must reinvigorate our commitments to commencing the negotiation of a legally binding

instrument to prevent an arms race in outer space in all its aspects in the Conference of Disarmament and avoid duplications in outer space security deliberations.

Our meeting today is a fail-safe mechanism, but not yet a solution to ensure the effectiveness of our multilateral system. Only by rebuilding trust among all will we be able to achieve sustainable peace in all domains, including in outer space.

Dame Barbara Woodward (United Kingdom): On 24 April (see S/PV.9616), the Security Council voted on draft resolution S/2024/302, submitted by the United States and Japan, which reaffirmed our commitment to the Outer Space Treaty. Thirteen member States voted in favour. One, the Russian Federation, used its veto.

Outer space belongs to all humankind and space technologies are critical to our daily lives, from using maps and checking the weather on our phones to international shipping and large-scale disaster risk reduction programmes. The far-reaching applications of space technologies are embedded in all of our economies. For that reason, we need to protect and regulate the safe use of space, while taking appropriate steps to prevent it from becoming the backdrop of the next arms race. To that end, the draft resolution would have reaffirmed the existing obligation not to place nuclear weapons in orbit around the Earth. It also called on States not to develop nuclear weapons specifically designed for such purposes. After all, if States intend, as they must, to comply with the Outer Space Treaty, they should not be preparing to breach it.

The detonation of even a single nuclear weapon in space could destroy or permanently damage a significant proportion of satellites in orbit around Earth. The resultant radiation and debris would render many orbits unusable for a very long time. There would be highly disruptive and possibly life-threatening consequences for those essential applications, maps and weather and risk monitoring that would affect all States, not least developing nations.

The United Kingdom therefore voted in favour of the draft resolution. There was nothing in the draft resolution that any law-abiding State committed to peace and the prevention of an arms race in outer space could reasonably object to. And yet, Russia did. That was not the first, but the second draft Council resolution on nuclear non-proliferation that Russia has vetoed in just one month. Russia vetoed draft resolution S/2024/255, which would have extended the mandate of the Panel of

Experts of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1718 (2006), despite — or rather because of — the Panel's proven track record of exposing the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's dangerous nuclear and missile programmes, in violation of Security Council resolutions. Russia's actions cannot be interpreted in any other way. They are seeking to undermine the global non-proliferation architecture, and that should be of grave concern to us all.

Mr. Amorín (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): The delegation of Uruguay expresses its gratitude for this meeting of the States members of the General Assembly regarding the use of the veto during the meeting of the Security Council on 24 April (see S/PV.9616), at which draft resolution S/2024/302, on outer space, considered under the agenda item "Non-proliferation", was vetoed.

In my country's opinion, the draft resolution presented balanced language that reaffirmed the obligations assumed within the framework of the Outer Space Treaty of 1967, specifically its article IV — not to place nuclear weapons in orbit around the Earth — and article IX — the principle of cooperation and mutual assistance in outer space activities. Uruguay reaffirms its adherence to the Treaty, ratified by our country on 4 June 1970.

We are pleased to see that the text of the draft resolution acknowledges the Joint Statement of the Leaders of the Five Nuclear-Weapon States, issued on 3 January 2022, in which those countries committed to making efforts to prevent a nuclear war and an arms race, and in which it was reaffirmed that a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought. Positive aspects are also raised regarding the objective of disarmament and international security, such as the call not to develop nuclear weapons or weapons of mass destruction that are specifically designed to be placed in outer space, in addition to respect for international law and the Charter of the United Nations in carrying out space exploration activities.

Uruguay reiterates its firm position against the abuse of the use of the veto power by any permanent member of the Council. The veto is a privilege that must be exercised with the utmost responsibility, in accordance with the principles of equity, transparency and accountability. We would like to underline our concern about the repeated use of that mechanism, which has been used five times in the four months of this year, since it hinders the functioning of the Security Council and undermines the spirit of cooperation and

commitment in the pursuit of common objectives, especially in matters related to international peace and security.

In conclusion, Uruguay reaffirms its responsibility to maintain international peace and security and calls on the members of the Security Council to redouble their efforts in addressing the challenges posed by the deployment of any type of weapons in outer space, with special emphasis on nuclear weapons. As we have already said in previous interventions, we remain firm in our support for multilateralism and the principles of the United Nations Charter in our collective search for a safer world.

Mr. Lagorio (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, Argentina would like to refer to the use of the veto and its nature. The term “veto” does not appear in the Charter of the United Nations; etymologically, it means “to prohibit”. In practice, that prohibition acts as an anti-democratic and inefficient tool within the framework of the United Nations, and its existence reflects an obsolete status quo resulting from a specific historical moment. That prohibition in the Security Council acts as a condition in the resolution of conflicts, preventing or impeding, in many cases, the United Nations from being able to offer solutions and relief in situations that endanger entire populations.

According to Article 24 of the Charter, the Security Council acts on behalf of the entire membership. For that reason, it has the legal, political and moral responsibility to act in an appropriate and responsible manner, and its members must make decisions based on the common interests of the entire United Nations. That is why my country would like to reiterate the importance of abolishing the mechanism for prohibition known as the veto or, at the very least, limiting it.

Secondly, Argentina recalls its co-sponsorship of draft resolution S/2024/302, on weapons of mass destruction in outer space, given that its fundamental objective was to prevent the development of weapons of mass destruction specifically designed to be placed in orbit around the Earth, or to be installed on celestial bodies, or to be located in outer space in any other way. We therefore regret the use of the veto against a draft resolution aimed at strengthening the legal regime in space and preventing an arms race in that area.

Argentina recognizes the common interest of all humankind and the sovereign right of every State to participate in the exploration and use of outer space for

exclusively peaceful purposes and is convinced of the benefits that its use can bring to human development. A conflict in outer space, in the opinion of my country, would have catastrophic consequences and endanger all uses and users. There are various emerging threats from space activity, whether intentional or not, that could have harmful consequences and quickly escalate into a conflict or affect cybersecurity.

For Argentina, the 1967 Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies is the cornerstone of the international legal regime for outer space. Our country reaffirms the fundamental role it plays in maintaining outer space for peaceful purposes, and especially its article IV, which prohibits the placement of weapons of mass destruction in outer space. In that context, we reiterate the need to move forward, within the framework of the Conference on Disarmament, on a treaty that prohibits the placement of weapons in outer space. Until that happens, we will promote the adoption of transparency and confidence-building measures in activities related to outer space.

Mr. Larsen (Australia): The veto initiative is an important mechanism for promoting the transparency and accountability of the Security Council.

Outer space is integral to humankind, and the Outer Space Treaty is the cornerstone agreement regulating the use and exploration of space. Compliance with that agreement helps preserve the essential space-based services that all Member States rely upon.

Draft resolution S/2024/302, put forward by the United States and Japan, was an opportunity for the Security Council to reaffirm its support for the Treaty. The draft resolution carried the simple message that States that are party to the Outer Space Treaty must comply with the Treaty, in particular the obligations set out in article IV. Importantly, the draft resolution also called on all States not to develop nuclear weapons or any other kind of weapon of mass destruction specifically designed to be placed in orbit around the Earth, or to be installed on celestial bodies, or stationed in outer space in any other manner. Unfortunately, Russia's actions mean that this was an opportunity missed, and that is why we are here. The Russian Federation's veto showed a disregard for international law and peace and security writ large.

Australia was pleased to be part of a cross-regional group of 65 States that sponsored the draft resolution. Notwithstanding Russia's actions, we will continue to call on all States parties to the Outer Space Treaty to comply with its obligations, including under article IV.

We also reaffirm Australia's commitment to pursuing our collective goal of the prevention of an arms race in outer space (PAROS) in a meaningful and effective manner.

First, that means adopting an approach to PAROS that takes into account the nature of the space environment as it now exists and the full range of threats we are now seeing, including from ground-based direct-ascent anti-satellite missiles. Secondly, it means addressing the definitional and verification challenges inherent in the dual-use nature of space objects where, for example, a robotic arm that clears space debris might also be used to intentionally damage a satellite. Thirdly, it means adopting an approach with the appropriate flexibility to keep up with technological advances and other developments in the space environment.

In conclusion, for those reasons more than any other, Australia advocates for an approach focused on developing rules and norms of responsible behaviours. Doing so avoids the definitional and verification challenges inherent in a capabilities-based approach.

Mr. Kulháněk (Czechia): Czechia fully aligns itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union. Allow me to now deliver a few remarks in my national capacity:

Czechia strongly condemns Russia's veto of Security Council draft resolution S/2024/302, aimed at keeping nuclear weapons out of outer space. However, today's discussion deserves to be set in a broader context. Within a historically short period of time, we have witnessed not only an unprecedented war of aggression waged by a permanent Council member against a fellow United Nations Member State, but also a systematic dismantling of the existing disarmament and non-proliferation architecture. That architecture — comprising legal obligations, political commitments and transparency and confidence-building measures — has been built for many decades in the interest of international security. Regrettably, a lot of it is deteriorating today due to the self-centred interests of just one country.

We have witnessed a number of steps taken by the Russian Federation that have torpedoed the disarmament and non-proliferation efforts of the international

community, but three really stand out from the recent past: the de-ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty; the veto of the mandate of the Panel of Experts of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1718 (2006), concerning the Democratic People's Republic of Korea; and now the veto of a Security Council draft resolution, introduced by the United States and Japan.

How should we interpret the refusal of one Security Council member State — and there was only one — to acknowledge the basic principles governing peaceful activities in outer space? Why would Russia take issue with the following notions from that draft resolution: reaffirming the applicability of international law, including the Charter of the United Nations, to outer space activities; reaffirming the need for all States parties to fully comply with their obligations under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons; and underscoring the importance of the Outer Space Treaty as the cornerstone of the international legal regime governing outer space activities?

Importantly, the draft resolution recalled that article IV of the Outer Space Treaty obligates States parties not to place in orbit around the Earth any objects carrying nuclear weapons or any other kind of weapon of mass destruction. We are deeply concerned that this may be the main reason why Russia felt implicated by the text, leading to its veto of the draft resolution.

The Russian representative to the United Nations posed a question in the Security Council: "What, then, is the real reason behind the American-Japanese idea of reaffirming that ban in 2024?" (S/PV.9616, p. 3), meaning the ban on placing nuclear weapons in outer space. Undoubtedly, there is an obvious reason on offer — the recent extension of Russia's irresponsible nuclear rhetoric, and potentially also actions, to the sphere of outer space. In fact, we should rather be asking about the motives behind the Russian opposition to resolution 78/20, "Reducing space threats through norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviours". To what extent can we trust Russia's intentions to preserve space assets, including those forming a part of the civilian critical infrastructure, from nuclear danger?

Czechia therefore strongly condemns Russia's veto of draft resolution S/2024/302 on 24 April (see S/PV.9616). The brazen obstruction of a draft resolution aimed at reiterating commitments outlined in the Outer Space Treaty is alarming. That reckless behaviour not only threatens to undermine the very foundations of the

Outer Space Treaty, but also casts doubt on the integrity of the entire international legal framework governing space activities. It is evident that Russia's actions pose a direct threat to the principles of peaceful uses and responsible behaviour in outer space, contrary to the very objectives it purportedly seeks to uphold.

Ms. Baptista Grade Zacarias (Portugal): Portugal aligns itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union.

As a co-sponsor of the veto initiative resolution 76/262, Portugal deeply regrets the use of the veto of draft resolution S/2024/302, aimed at reaffirming a well-established obligation enshrined in the Outer Space Treaty — the shared obligation not to place in orbit around the Earth any objects carrying nuclear weapons or any other kind of weapon of mass destruction. We stress the importance of holding accountability for the use of the veto in the Security Council, increasing its responsibility towards the General Assembly and the global community. With six vetoes in the first four months of 2024, matching last year's total and reaching the highest number in the past seven years, we urge that its use be restricted and exercised sensibly and in strict adherence to the Charter of the United Nations until consensus is reached to abolish it.

The draft resolution, which had a total of 65 sponsors and 13 votes in favour, was a lost opportunity for the Council to show its unity on a topic that is of interest to all Member States, and it is yet another sign of the Council's shortcomings in delivering stability and peace on behalf of the whole United Nations membership. The veto cast on 24 April (see S/PV.9616) unfortunately also shows that one Member State is unable to reaffirm the commitment to not placing any weapons of mass destruction in outer space, which is an essential component of the global non-proliferation architecture.

At a time when the peaceful uses of outer space are increasingly indispensable to the normal conduct of our daily lives, Portugal is committed to promoting a safe, secure and sustainable space environment. That is why we are hosting an international conference, with the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs, on the topic of management and sustainability of outer space activities, later this month, on 14 and 15 May, in Lisbon. The conference will be an opportunity for Member States to discuss, in an open and inclusive way, the future of the management and sustainability of outer space activities.

Space science, applications and technologies hold significant potential to address the major common challenges that we face as an international community. That alone should be a strong incentive for us all to strive for a safe, secure and sustainable outer space.

Let me reaffirm Portugal's strong support for the Outer Space Treaty, whose obligations remain incumbent upon all States parties, including the obligation not to place in orbit around the Earth any objects carrying nuclear weapons or any other kind of weapon of mass destruction. We also reaffirm our full support for the common long-standing goal of preventing an arms race in outer space. We hope that, in spite of the veto, the commitment of the international community towards those goals and obligations will not be questioned.

In conclusion, let me assure Members that Portugal will continue to actively engage with a view to preventing threats in outer space and to ensuring a safe, secure and sustainable space environment for all on an equitable basis.

Mr. Abushahab (United Arab Emirates): The United Arab Emirates deeply regrets that the Security Council was unable to adopt its first-ever draft resolution on weapons of mass destruction in outer space (draft resolution S/2024/302). By failing to adopt the draft resolution, the Council missed an important opportunity to take an initial step towards preserving outer space for peaceful purposes, in service of all humankind.

While peace and security often remain elusive on Earth, we have the chance to get it right in outer space from the start. Today, 70 years after the initial international space race, the stakes are far higher and an arms race in outer space involving nuclear or other weapons of mass destruction could have far reaching consequences for all of humankind. Increasing divisions within the Security Council, particularly among its permanent members, undermine our collective efforts to maintain international peace and security, including in outer space. It is therefore crucial that the wider membership strengthen its cooperation on that vital new horizon for international peace.

The United Arab Emirates believes that more needs to be done to prevent an arms race in outer space. While the Outer Space Treaty has laid a firm foundation for safeguarding our space for the benefit of exploration, advances in technology and continued geopolitical tensions compel us to proceed with caution.

If the Security Council were to consider another draft resolution on this issue, we believe that it should recognize three elements. First, the Council should strive to adopt its first resolution on outer space with a united front and the unanimous support of all its members. Secondly, any resolution should reaffirm the rights of Member States to the peaceful use and exploration of outer space. It should not hinder either those countries with established space exploration programmes or those with ambitions to do so in the future. Thirdly, the Council's efforts to address outer space in its deliberations should be complementary to the existing efforts of Member States in other forums.

All countries have a shared stake in preventing an arms race in outer space. Our collective efforts would be better focused on what that new arena has to offer — an unparalleled opportunity to harness human ingenuity, curiosity and international cooperation. That is something the United Arab Emirates firmly believes in. For our part, we will continue to strive for the exclusively peaceful use of that final frontier.

Ms. Stoeva (Bulgaria): Bulgaria aligns itself with the statement delivered by observer of the European Union and with the statement delivered by the representative of New Zealand on behalf of a group of States committed to the implementation of resolution 76/262. I would like to highlight a few points in my national capacity.

While we regret that yet another veto was cast in the Security Council (see S/PV.9616), we welcome today's veto initiative debate, as it offers an opportunity to express our views on a matter that concerns us all, namely, the peaceful use of outer space. Proof of the importance of the issue are the 65 sponsors of draft resolution S/2024/302 and the fact that it received 13 votes in favour in the Security Council.

Once again, the Russian Federation has abused its position as a permanent member of the Security Council and given priority to its own interests, thereby undermining peace and security in outer space. Regrettably, with its veto the Russian Federation has prevented the Council from adopting a draft resolution that urged all Member States to carry out space activities in full compliance with international law, called on Member States not to develop nuclear weapons or any other kind of weapon of mass destruction, specifically designed to be placed in orbit, and called for universal accession to the Outer Space Treaty. Bulgaria co-sponsored the draft, proposed by the United States

and Japan, and regrets that it was not adopted for the following reasons.

Bulgaria supports the fundamental principles of international space law enshrined in the Outer Space Treaty, which are the cornerstone of the international legal regime governing outer space activities. We are convinced that the Treaty furthers the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. The exploitation and use of outer space should be carried out in a peaceful manner and in full compliance with the obligation under article IV of the Treaty.

The vetoed draft cannot and will not weaken the resolve of the Security Council and the States parties to the Outer Space Treaty to prevent an arms race in outer space, nor does it strip nuclear-weapon States of their primary responsibility to avoid actions that increase the risk of nuclear conflict and in no way absolves the Russian Federation of its obligations under the Outer Space Treaty.

At the time when the Outer Space Treaty was elaborated, the international community rose to the responsibility to reach a legal consensus on refraining from militarizing outer space. Nowadays, as our societies become increasingly reliant on space systems for their short- and long-term sustainability as regards security, economic prosperity and daily life, we have a shared interest in promoting the continued peaceful uses of space. Bulgaria, as a State party to the Treaty, is committed to supporting further efforts of the Council and the Assembly to that end and to engage in preserving space so as to allow future generations to take full advantage of the opportunities it offers.

Mr. Wood (United States of America): The United States appreciates the opportunity to join this debate following Russia's use of a veto on the Security Council draft resolution on weapons of mass destruction in outer space (see S/PV.9616). This is a critical opportunity to promote transparency and accountability for all permanent members of the Security Council.

On 24 April, Russia vetoed draft resolution S/2024/302, which would have reaffirmed the shared goal of all States to prevent an arms race in outer space and urged the exploration and use of outer space for peaceful purposes. It would have affirmed the obligations of all States parties to the Outer Space Treaty not to place any objects carrying nuclear weapons or any other kind of weapon of mass destruction in orbit around Earth — a treaty that 115 countries have joined,

including Russia and China. It would have also called on Member States not to even develop nuclear weapons specifically designed for placement in orbit, and it would have reduced the risk of a nuclear detonation in space, which could destroy satellites that are vital to communications, agriculture, sustainable development, national security and more.

It should not be at all controversial or difficult for the Security Council to affirm the clear obligations of parties under the Outer Space Treaty, nor should it be difficult to ask that States work together towards our shared interests. Needless to say, we are incredibly disappointed by Russia's decision to veto the draft resolution, which was supported by 13 of the Council's 15 members and sponsored by 65 countries. The United States and Japan, as co-penholders, were deliberate, transparent, inclusive and flexible in our approach to the draft resolution. Indeed, the text evolved significantly over the course of five weeks of negotiations into a product that not a single other Council member opposed.

Instead, Russia has now submitted its own draft resolution to the Security Council on that issue — a draft resolution that we all know is designed to divide rather than unite Member States; a draft resolution that includes language that was rejected by the Security Council and has failed to reach consensus in other bodies. Members should make no mistake that this is a diplomatic façade that hides Russia's true intentions. The truth is that Russia currently has several conventional anti-satellite weapons already in orbit, one of which it tested in 2019. Moreover, Russia has repeatedly threatened satellites for targeting with weapons, to include commercial satellites.

No one should forget Russia's November 2021 destructive anti-satellite missile test, which created thousands of pieces of space debris, or its ongoing jamming of communications and navigation satellites in support of its illegal war in Ukraine.

Finally, there is credible information that Russia is developing a new satellite carrying a nuclear device. We have heard President Putin say publicly that Russia has no intention of deploying nuclear weapons in space. If that were the case, Russia would not have vetoed the draft resolution. Russia's actions cast significant doubt as to whether it will uphold its existing legal obligations under the Outer Space Treaty and raise concerns about what that could mean for international peace and security.

That is why it is so critical for all of us to raise our voices today in support of the Outer Space Treaty and its clear prohibition on placing nuclear weapons in orbit. Nor should we let Russia distract from that message by seeking to advance its own draft resolution with language that draws on discussions that are well under way in other forums and have not yet reached consensus. Russia's actions seek only to divide States, not unite us.

The United States looks forward to working with all Member States to further the objectives of the draft resolution, to build trust in the international regime governing arms control, disarmament, non-proliferation and space, and to work in good faith in the Security Council to advance our shared goals related to international peace and security.

Mr. França Danese (Brazil): Since 1967, the Outer Space Treaty has provided a clear set of obligations regarding space security and peaceful uses of outer space. Its article IV bans the placement of nuclear weapons or any other kind of weapon of mass destruction in orbit or on celestial bodies. That is one of the unsung major victories of the arms control efforts of the Cold War era, whose success is often underestimated and underappreciated.

Well, we do not underestimate or underappreciate it. The importance of that key tenet of the Outer Space Treaty has only grown since 1967, given the crucial role played by space activities for all types of critical infrastructures on which all States depend. In turn, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons established the unequivocal obligation of all its parties to pursue negotiations on effective measures relating to the cessation of the nuclear arms race and to nuclear disarmament.

Considering the obligations that arise from those two treaties, we can conclude that a nuclear arms race in outer space would be a clear-cut violation of the existing legal framework pertaining both to space security and to the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regimes. Moreover, it would represent a direct threat to the principles of peaceful uses of outer space and due regard to the interests of all other States, according to the Outer Space Treaty.

It is very concerning that no concrete progress in the prevention of an arms race in outer space has been achieved since the final document of the 1978 first special session on disarmament (resolution S-10/2),

which recommended the pursuit of international negotiations in that field. The crucial issue of preventing the weaponization of outer space is now the object of a decades-long deadlock that only breeds the zero-sum logic that has been feeding this discussion.

The debate we witnessed in the Security Council on 24 April (see S/PV.9616) again made evident the harmful logic that has impeded progress on the prevention of an arms race in outer space in the Conference on Disarmament, in Geneva, and in the General Assembly. It made it even more evident that there is no shortcut for this discussion. Either all parties engage in serious negotiations that take into account the security concerns of all States or we risk continuous failures and a downward spiral towards a severe deterioration of the security environment in outer space, which would be detrimental to all States.

Mr. Vidal Mercado (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): We appreciate the convening of this formal meeting to discuss the veto in the Security Council on Wednesday, 24 April (see S/PV.9616) of draft resolution S/2024/302, presented by the United States and Japan, on the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction in outer space. We take note of the special report issued by the Security Council on that matter (S/2024/861).

We recognize that 63 other States Members of the Organization sponsored the draft resolution. Although our country was not one of the sponsors, we regret that the text was not adopted despite the fact that it enjoyed the support of 13 favourable votes from the members of the Security Council. We emphasize our position on the use of the veto and the danger it poses in eroding the credibility of the multilateral system. We emphasize that it must be limited in circumstances such as mass atrocities and war crimes, since we are conscious that the protection of human life must be our highest priority.

We therefore maintain that the Franco-Mexican initiative, which already has 106 signatory States, and the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency group's code of conduct for the Security Council response in cases of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes, with 130 signatory States, should continue to be discussed and approved by the General Assembly. We call on more Members to sign both initiatives.

We once again emphasize that the Security Council and its working methods should be restructured in such a way that decisions on safeguarding international peace and security can be taken in a timely manner and better

reflect current geopolitical realities. That is crucial to strengthening the capacity of the Organization as a whole.

My country believes that it is essential to promote the principle of the indivisibility of international security, that is, that all States have a shared responsibility to contribute to the consolidation of an international order based on cooperation and regulated by rules. For that reason, regarding the draft resolution that was vetoed, we emphasize that it mentions the importance of the peaceful use of outer space and the obligations imposed by the Outer Space Treaty, in particular its article IV, in pursuit of international peace and security. We urge all States to champion and promote universal adherence to and compliance with the Outer Space Treaty.

We followed closely the meeting of the Security Council on 24 April, as all members of that body insisted on the prohibition of placing any object carrying nuclear weapons or any other type of weapon of mass destruction in orbit around the Earth. It is essential to promote general and complete disarmament, always prioritizing the debate in a broad and democratic multilateral space, in line with the Charter of the United Nations and international law. We take this opportunity to reiterate that the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons remains the cornerstone of the pillar of the international disarmament, non-proliferation and nuclear security architecture.

We observe with deep concern the deterioration of the arms control regime built up over decades. We consider it urgent to have a dialogue on strategic security among nuclear States that allows for stable and predictable relations, reinforcing transparency and generating trust with robust and credible legal and verification regimes. We agree that nuclear weapons are a source of insecurity and must be eliminated. The common objective must remain the total elimination of those weapons without further delay. Maintaining international peace and security without resorting to nuclear deterrence is not only an ethical imperative but also an achievable goal and in line with the system of protection of human rights.

For those reasons, we believe that the objective and content of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons are on the right track because it incorporates a series of concerns of the States Members of the Organization.

Mr. Szczerski (Poland): In subscribing to the statement delivered today by the observer of the European Union, I would now like to state that, in Poland's opinion, the vetoed draft resolution S/2024/302 was aimed at reiterating and emphasizing the legally binding restrictions on placing weapons of mass destruction in outer space, a goal that should be shared by all Member States. We are deeply disappointed by the clear Russian policy to block the United Nations work in many critical areas of arms control and international security, including outer space.

Two clear examples of such obstructive behaviour include Russia's recent blocking of the final report of the Open-ended Working Group on reducing space threats through norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviours in Geneva, and its attempt to create a parallel track in that area by proposing a competing and unnecessary draft resolution. Any further attempt to undermine or malign existing norms for outer space use could have disastrous and unpredictable consequences.

To conclude, I would like to underline the need to act responsibly in order to avoid jeopardizing the future of space exploration and its potential to improve our lives.

Mr. Jovanovic (Italy): Italy fully aligns itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union and would like to add some considerations in its national capacity.

Italy expresses profound concern about Russia's recent veto in the Security Council (see S/PV.9616), blocking draft resolution S/2024/302 on weapons of mass destruction in outer space, sponsored by 65 United Nations Member States. We share the alarm voiced today by many Member States regarding the importance of ensuring the peaceful use of outer space. We recall Russia's responsibility, as a permanent member of the Security Council, in maintaining international peace and security, as well as the need to prevent an arms race in outer space.

Promoting the continued peaceful uses of space is a priority for the entire international community. A nuclear detonation in outer space would prevent all States from benefiting from the use of satellites for agriculture, weather, environmental protection and the management of natural resources, with dramatic effects on the Sustainable Development Goals as well. Vetoing initiatives aimed at enforcing global security and tackling major global challenges impedes progress

towards international peace and security. Moreover, the veto was a stark reminder of the current and dangerous challenges that we continue to face in upholding the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the rule of law in the international arena.

Italy reiterates the existing obligations under the Outer Space Treaty, which prohibits the placement of nuclear weapons in orbit around Earth and calls upon all States not to develop nuclear weapons or any other kind of weapon of mass destruction specifically designed to be placed in outer space.

Ms. Leendertse (Germany): Germany aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union.

Germany deeply regrets the Russian veto of draft resolution S/2024/302, on outer space, on 24 April (see S/PV.9616). The draft resolution would have advanced a vital interest that unites all humankind — to prevent space from becoming a theatre of war by reaffirming the Outer Space Treaty's provision not to place any nuclear or other weapons of mass destruction in outer space. It would have called on all Member States not to develop nuclear weapons or any kind of weapon of mass destruction specifically designed to be placed in outer space.

Why is Russia unable to support the draft resolution? Taken at face value, Russia's vetoing of a draft resolution pursuing objectives of space security that should be beyond all doubt raises doubts about whether Russia is considering including a nuclear device in its outer space programme. Pursuing such plans is to expose all humankind to great risk. The potential blanket consequences of a nuclear explosion in orbit on both civilian and military infrastructures on Earth would be devastating for all of us.

Russia's delusive proposal for an amendment to the outer space draft resolution deliberately ignored the fact that no definition of "weapons in outer space" exists and that therefore no international agreement around that concept is within reach. Almost any outer space object can have both a civilian and military use. That is why, building on the Outer Space Treaty, the focus on norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviours is key when trying to elaborate the features of some sort of regime governing space security.

We therefore implore all Member States to be vigilant. Russia is systematically undermining the Charter of the United Nations, international law and

the existing arms control architecture. We see that reckless pattern in Russia's illegal war of aggression against Ukraine, which the General Assembly has firmly condemned. We see it in Russia's irresponsible cyberattacks, like the one against Germany that we attributed to Russia a few days ago. We see it in Russia's systematic destruction of the international arms control architecture. Russia has suspended the New START Treaty, it has withdrawn from the Conventional Armed Forces in Europe Treaty and it has de-ratified the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

It was just a few weeks ago (see S/PV.9591) that Russia cast a veto against the extension of the mandate of the Panel of Experts of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1718 (2006), concerning the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. That again begged the question: What is Russia hiding from the world? We all know that the panel was reporting on the unlawful arms transfers between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and Russia, in the context of Russia's illegal war of aggression against Ukraine.

Today's debate is not technical. It is not about different opinions on how to strengthen the Outer Space Treaty. It is about something entirely different. Russia, as a permanent member of the Security Council, is playing with the hellfire of nuclear destruction. Our plea today is simple. We call on all Member States to fully comply with their obligations under the Outer Space Treaty and to seize the opportunity to achieve international commitment not to ever developing nuclear weapons or other weapons of mass destruction specifically designed to be placed in outer space. There is no justification for abdicating from those commitments and responsibilities.

Mr. Al Ashkar (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): The Syrian Arab Republic stresses the legitimate rights of all States in the exploration and use of outer space exclusively for peaceful purposes. We believe that placing weapons in outer space and pursuing an arms race therein poses a dual threat to the international community. Given the fact that the security of outer space is a vital interest of all States, my country's delegation emphasizes the importance of addressing the challenges of outer space within the framework of the most inclusive forums, which include all Member States.

My country stresses that peace in outer space can be ensured not by prohibiting certain kinds of weapons, but rather by prohibiting all kinds of weapons, including weapons of mass destruction, as stipulated in the 1967 Outer Space Treaty. That objective requires the development of a legally binding and verifiable instrument to prohibit an arms race in outer space. In that context, Syria supports the draft convention on preventing the placement of weapons in outer space and the threat or use of force against outer space objects, submitted to the Conference on Disarmament in 2008 and updated in 2014 by the Russian Federation and China.

Draft resolution S/2024/302, submitted by the United States and Japan, represents a selective and partial approach to addressing the challenges of outer space security. It raises doubts as to the real intentions behind that approach. My country's delegation regrets that the amendment (S/2024/323) submitted by the delegations of the Russian Federation and China to the draft resolution was not adopted and believes that it would have made the draft resolution more ambitious, comprehensive and balanced.

The continued attempts of certain Western members of the Security Council to impose their point of view while ignoring the concerns of other Council members undermine the work of the Council and divide it further. Attempts to exploit the platform of the Security Council to score political points and achieve narrow interests, accompanied by actions undertaken by the United States to prevent the Council from fulfilling its responsibilities regarding the crimes of aggression and grave violations of human rights committed by the Israeli entity in Gaza for the past seven months, threaten the Council's essential mandate of maintaining international peace and security.

In conclusion, the Syrian Arab Republic reiterates the importance of addressing the challenges of outer space through integrated and balanced frameworks that respond to the concerns of all Member States and serve our common goals of preserving that common heritage of humankind while maintaining its peacefulness, security and sustainability.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.