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Seventy-first session

First Committee

3rd meeting

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Official Records

Chair: Mr. Boukadoum (Algeria)

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

Agenda items 89 to 105 (continued)

General debate on all disarmament and international security agenda items

The Chair: Before I open the floor, I would like to remind all delegations once more that the rolling list of speakers for this segment of our work will close at 6 p.m. today. All delegations that intend to take the floor should inscribe their names on the list before that deadline.

I would further remind delegations that, although the practice is to limit statements to 10 minutes when speaking in a national capacity and 15 minutes for those speaking on behalf of several delegations, I count on members' kind cooperation in limiting statements to eight and 13 minutes, respectively, for this session.

Mr. Bernardi (Australia): I congratulate you, Sir, on your election as Chair of the First Committee at its seventy-first session. Australia is pleased to see you chairing this important Committee. You can be assured of my delegation's support, including in our role as Rapporteur.

We are here to make a practical difference to regional and global security and the lives of the people of the world, who want to live in peace, security and prosperity. Perhaps it is not surprising that, when our objective is so ambitious, progress can seem frustratingly slow. Our shared disarmament objectives may also seem a long way off, given the growing polarization in the international community following

the inability of last year's Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) to agree on a consensus outcome and in the light of the continuing failure in the Conference on Disarmament to agree on substantive work. But just because something is hard and painstakingly slow, it does not mean that it is any less worth doing. If we are to realize our collective ambition of enhancing global security and stability, we must recommit ourselves to the painstaking and unavoidable work of practical, nuclear disarmament and confidence-building measures that engage all States concerned.

Our objectives are not only humanitarian, but also to enhance the security of all States. Therefore, we argue that disarmament that leads to our collective goal of a world without nuclear weapons must involve all States, including those possessing nuclear weapons. In fact, nuclear disarmament expectations fall most heavily on the nuclear-weapon States. Pursuing a separate treaty to make nuclear weapons illegal without the participation of those possessing nuclear weapons would risk undermining the security afforded by the NPT. It would also ignore current global security realities. By way of specific examples, a treaty banning nuclear weapons would neither convince a State like the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to give up its nuclear-weapons programme nor help prevent nuclear materials falling into the hands of terrorists.

Over 45 years, the careful balance struck in the NPT has worked, thereby providing real security and enabling societies to benefit from the peaceful use of nuclear technologies. Despite our different national

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perspectives on security, none of us should lose sight of the central, ongoing importance of the NPT to global peace and security, especially as we embark upon the next five-year NPT review cycle. Nor should we relent in our pursuit of the critical steps that must be in place to secure nuclear disarmament, notably, the continuing priority of the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). The nuclear-test moratorium needs strengthening to prevent slipping back to a time of nuclear tests, and the CTBT is more than a practical commitment not to test nuclear weapons. It is symbolic of a broader undertaking to prevent their further development. Australia calls on the nuclear-weapon possessors and other annex 2 countries that have not yet ratified it to do so.

Turning to conventional disarmament, we welcome the momentum generated by accessions to the landmark Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) and encourage States to continue efforts towards its universalization. Australia is fully committed to continuing its work to encourage all States, especially those in the Indo-Pacific region, to accede to the Treaty and to sustaining our assistance on ATT implementation.

Global terrorism continues to be a menace on many fronts, involving many different actors. This year, Da'esh is under increasing pressure. It is losing territory, financing and fighters. But we cannot take for granted the battles won or the progress made towards peace and stability. Australia is working closely with our friends and allies to destroy Da'esh's so-called caliphate in Syria and Iraq. We cannot entirely eliminate the risk of terrorism, but we can mitigate it through sustained national efforts and international cooperation. We commend the enhanced efforts countries are making to tackle terrorism, including new and deeper measures to address the cause of violent extremism.

Australia remains deeply concerned about ongoing reports of chemical weapons being used in Syria and Iraq. We call on the international community to redouble efforts to eliminate completely the remaining chemical-weapon stockpiles and production capabilities, prevent the acquisition, production and use of chemical weapons and demonstrate its resolve to hold perpetrators accountable. The Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) Joint Investigative Mechanism investigation has found that the Syrian regime was responsible for using chemical weapons against civilians in 2014 and 2015. There can therefore be no doubt that the Al-Assad regime has

repeatedly used chemical weapons against its own people, in violation of international law, including the Chemical Weapons Convention and Security Council resolution 2118 (2013). We also note that the report of the Joint Investigative Mechanism finds that Da'esh has also used chemical weapons. We condemn in the strongest possible terms the use of chemical weapons by any party to that conflict.

As we approach the eighth Review Conference of the Parties to the Biological Weapons Convention, we urge all Member State parties to work towards consensus outcomes that will strengthen its operative articles and create an effective, forward agenda for future action. We also need to raise awareness of the emergence of new types of potential weapons agents. One particular concern is the use in law-enforcement scenarios of aerosolized chemicals that affect the central nervous system. Australia welcomes the adoption of Security Council resolution 2235 (2015) because it sends a strong, unified message to treaty violators. Australia will continue working with others to ensure the realization of such objectives, which apply equally to the Biological Weapons Convention. This month, for example, we will host a skills-training course to build operational capacity in our region to respond to the alleged use of biological weapons.

Australia welcomes the continuing attention paid to cyberissues and cyberspace in the context of international security. In April 2016, Australia released its second national cybersecurity strategy to respond to the dual challenges of advancing and protecting interests online. We welcome the establishment of the 2016-2017 Group of Governmental Experts on Developments in the Field of Information and Telecommunications in the Context of International Security, as well as Australia's selection for the Group. We encourage the Group to deepen understanding on the norms of responsible State behaviour in cyberspace, and we look forward to the General Assembly's consideration of the outcomes of that stream of work.

The safety, security and sustainability of the space environment should be a high priority for the international community, given our increasing reliance on space for our prosperity and development. Australia places a premium on practical and near-term steps to protect every nation's access to the space environment. We welcome the agreement by the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space to the first set of guidelines for the long-term sustainability

of outer-space activities, which we see as an important contribution to space security, including in addressing the pressing issue of space debris.

Australians have a reputation for pragmatism, including in the multilateral sphere. We remain committed to playing our part and working constructively and with determination to achieve our shared goal of enhancing global security and stability through the important work of the Committee.

Ms. Vanamo (Finland): On behalf of Finland, I would like to join previous speakers in congratulating you, Sir, on your election as Chair of the First Committee. Let me assure you of the full support of my delegation.

In addition to the statement made on behalf of the European Union (see A/C.1/71/PV.2), I would like to make the following remarks in my national capacity. Let me also refer to statements to be made later on behalf of other Nordic countries.

Last year, we paid attention to the fact that First Committee meetings are taking place against the backdrop of continuing international tension. Unfortunately, the situation has not changed, and we believe that that is also true in Europe. That makes arms-control, disarmament and non-proliferation efforts all the more important and urgent. The rule of law is the guiding principle of international affairs, including in this field, and we should all continue to find practical ways to build and rebuild confidence. Let me highlight the priorities for Finland during the weeks to come.

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) remains the cornerstone of the international non-proliferation regime and a key element in the international security architecture. The commitments on all three pillars of the NPT remain valid and important, including those under article VI of the Treaty. Finland shares the objective of a world free of nuclear weapons and supports efforts that would lead to a concrete outcome. In our view, the full implementation of the NPT is also crucial as it pertains to nuclear disarmament. It is important to ensure the participation of the nuclear-weapon States in any nuclear-disarmament process if we want to decrease the number of nuclear weapons in the world.

I would like to underline that concerns related to nuclear weapons are concerns that we all share.

We recognize that, as long as nuclear weapons exist, there is a risk of a catastrophe with immeasurable human and humanitarian costs. We should also think about how to enhance conditions for a more conducive environment for nuclear disarmament. Transparency and confidence-building measures are key, not only in the field of nuclear disarmament but also in conventional arms control.

We welcome the cooperation among the five permanent members of the Security Council in the field of nuclear disarmament. We think that initiatives such as the International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification can build common understanding and confidence among the nuclear-weapon States and non-nuclear-weapon States. We underline the importance of the continued implementation of the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty between the Russian Federation and the United States. We encourage all parties concerned to look for additional nuclear-disarmament measures, including on tactical nuclear weapons, regardless of how difficult that may be.

Let me also mention the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). The entry into force of that Treaty remains a priority, even though the voluntary moratorium on nuclear-weapon tests is nearly universal. I would also like to point out the importance of the verification system — the International Monitoring System network. That network has provided us with essential information many times in various situations. Thanks to the network, countries can no longer hide nuclear tests.

Most of us also agree that a fissile material cut-off treaty should be negotiated, and we are ready to support efforts to relaunch serious work to that end. We urge others to do the same.

We commend the progress achieved with Iran on the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, and we stress the need for its effective implementation. Still, the threat of nuclear-weapon proliferation continues to be a serious concern.

Finland strongly condemns the nuclear test conducted by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea on 9 September. The nuclear and missile tests continue that country's series of grave violations of international obligations, which have become alarmingly common this year. They are also extremely dangerous for the stability of the region and beyond. We urge the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to

fully observe its international obligations, abandon its nuclear programme and commit to close cooperation with the international community.

It is also important that we continue to address other threats related to nuclear and radiological material, in particular by non-State actors. The focus in nuclear security should be on prevention. In that regard, the role of information and intelligence-sharing among the competent authorities is a key element, not to mention the role of export control and other control mechanisms.

Let me now turn to chemical and biological threats. Finland contributed to and welcomes the complete destruction of the chemical-weapons programme declared by the Syrian Arab Republic. However, we remain concerned about the inconsistencies that remain in Syria's declaration and in its implementation. We welcome the third report of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism, which, at the same time, raises serious concerns. We need to remain clear that the use of chemical weapons by anyone, anytime and anywhere and under any circumstances is clearly contrary to international law and must be condemned by the international community. The perpetrators of such acts must be held accountable.

The safe removal of Libya's remaining chemical-weapon precursors, in compliance with the Chemical Weapons Convention and Security Council resolution 2298 (2016), constitutes a positive and important development for the stability of Libya and the wider region. Finland participated in that operation by making a financial contribution and by posting officers for advisory and expert positions in the maritime transport operation, which was led by Denmark.

We should also pay more attention to biosecurity. Finland is strongly committed to a successful, consensus-based outcome to the eighth Review Conference of the Parties to the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention. We would especially like to see progress in the area of science and technology, while taking into consideration rapid technological and scientific developments. We also see merit in strengthening the ability to take collective action between the review conferences. Furthermore, we support the Secretary-General's mechanism for investigation of alleged use of biological and chemical weapons.

Finally, let me address conventional weapons, and especially small arms and light weapons. It is important

to remember that such weapons cause the most casualties, and that often it is civilians, particularly women and children, who are most affected by armed conflict and violence. Finland is a strong supporter of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) and believes in its ability to increase international peace and stability and to reduce human suffering. The ATT is a significant achievement for the international community. The Treaty was designed to provide norms for a responsible trade in conventional arms, but it does much more. We welcome the outcome of the second Conference of States Parties, held in August, which provided a solid foundation for a functioning ATT regime.

As the current President of the ATT, Finland is engaged in the joint effort to proceed from the establishment of administrative structures to substantive work. We look forward to the contribution of all three working groups. We need to ensure effective implementation, especially in the context of combating illegal and unregulated flows of arms to conflict areas. The ATT Voluntary Trust Fund will be a valuable instrument in supporting national capacity-building. The Finnish presidency, headed by Ambassador Klaus Korhonen and the four Vice-Presidents, will be promoting the universalization of the ATT. We encourage all members of the international community to join that important Treaty.

The numerous conflicts around the world are also creating new minefields and other explosive hazards. In Syria and Iraq, the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant has extensively employed improvised explosive devices (IEDs). Millions of Iraqis and Syrians continue to face a deadly threat every day. Mines and IEDs seriously hamper not just humanitarian action but also the stabilization of the region. Finland continues to engage in global efforts to alleviate the humanitarian consequences of anti-personnel mines, cluster munitions and explosive remnants of war. Finland will support humanitarian mine action over the next four years with €12 million for Afghanistan, Syria, Iraq, Somalia and Ukraine.

Mr. Mendoza-García (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me to congratulate you, Sir, and other members of the Bureau on your election to steer the work of the First Committee. At the same time, we thank Ambassador Van Oosterom, Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, and his team for the work done during the previous session.

Costa Rica aligns itself with the statement to be made by the representative of the Dominican Republic on behalf of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States.

When we tally the international community's most important achievements and challenges over the past year in the areas of nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control, the result is a complex one; it was both satisfactory and full of contrasts. On the one hand, next December will mark two years since the entry into force of the Arms Trade Treaty and, in late August, we held the second Conference of States Parties in Geneva. We took very important decisions at the Conference on the functioning and the consolidation of the secretariat that would allow for the effective implementation of the Treaty and its subsidiary bodies, *inter alia*; but we must move towards substantive discussion, in particular on an assessment of weapons transfers that violate the purpose of the Treaty.

The aim of the Treaty is to save lives. As one of the co-authors of the Treaty, Costa Rica supported it in order to strengthen the protection of human rights and uphold international humanitarian law. Although we now have the first international instrument that sets out legally binding obligations for States to ensure the responsible and effective monitoring of international transfers of conventional arms, ammunition, parts and components, the situation in various regions of the world is far from what we had expected with its entry into force. We still bear witness to many very serious acts that violate the purpose of the Arms Trade Treaty — violations that, regrettably, are experienced at first hand by the civilian populations in the Middle East and Africa.

In our own subregion, we see the painful plight of societies affected by armed violence and vulnerable to the illicit trafficking of such weapons, especially small and light weapons and their ammunition. Such irresponsible transfers must stop now. The express prohibitions of the Treaty are not suggestions — they are obligations. Costa Rica will continue to urge the States parties and the major exporters and importers of conventional weapons not to disregard such obligations, while urging those that have not yet signed and ratified the Treaty to do so without further delay — in particular the permanent members of the Security Council, which must shoulder the greater responsibility conferred upon them by the Charter of the United Nations, namely, maintaining international peace and security.

After having participated in the most recent Conference of States Parties to review the implementation of the Treaty's institutional framework, I must state that we are proud to have contributed to that process as one of the Vice-Presidents of the Conference, together with Finland, and to have submitted a proposal to discuss the implementation of the Treaty. For those of us that are already States parties, a major challenge ahead lies in the effective implementation of the Treaty. I must point out that the Costa Rican Government is fulfilling its duties in that regard. As a country without an army and a modest importer, Costa Rica is setting up the structures, systems, procedures and capacity required to apply the Treaty to the situation in our country. Given our geographical location, we are particularly interested in complying with article 11, on the issue of diversion.

During the process of national implementation and capacity-building in Costa Rican institutions, I underscore the crucial international assistance from valuable partners such as the European Union, through the German Federal Office for Economic Affairs and Export Control, and representatives of United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean (UNLIREC). Cooperation, exchange of knowledge and information and international assistance play a very important role in strengthening the regime. In that vein, with the assistance of UNLIREC and the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces, Costa Rica is also making progress towards the effective and transparent management of the use of small arms and ammunition in the private security sector. In one year, we hope to have completed the process of certifying the best operational management practices in private security companies. My country will then have better regulation, control and accountability, which will also help to tackle illicit arms trafficking and armed violence.

Costa Rica would like to express its deep concern about the high rate of civilian casualties in internal and international hostilities. Even with countries' highly sophisticated technical, military and security capabilities, they have not been able to prevent civilian populations from being daily targets of the impact of violence caused by the use of force. In the past, civilian populations were victims of collateral damage. Today, however, they are the direct targets of combatants and, in many cases, their homes, schools, hospitals, property and production have become deliberate military targets.

We are deeply concerned about the fact that we are witnessing such events in Syria and other countries in the Middle East and Asia.

For that reason, Costa Rica rejects and condemns in the strongest terms the use of explosive weapons in populated areas and forced displacement. We call upon States to develop stricter rules and commitments to prohibit and restrict the use of such weapons, not only to end the egregious violations of international humanitarian law but also because drastically reducing harm to civilians is essential to discouraging local people from taking up weapons and joining extremist causes. Costa Rica supports all initiatives that enable parties to conflict to restrict their use of explosive weapons with wide-ranging effects in populated areas and acknowledges that such use is a humanitarian problem that must be addressed urgently.

Similarly, my country condemns any use of cluster munitions by any actor, because such actions run counter to the spirit, object and letter of the Convention on Cluster Munitions and merely serve to heighten human suffering and the adverse humanitarian impact on the most vulnerable. We therefore reiterate the importance for all States parties to the Convention to complete the implementation of their obligations no later than 2030, according to the objectives set out in the Dubrovnik Action Plan.

We are also concerned that lethal autonomous weapons could change the nature of armed conflicts. Their existence would increase the risk of covert operations and deliberate violations of international humanitarian law, exacerbate the imbalance in some armed conflicts and lead to impunity because it would be impossible to lay blame for the attacks. Lethal autonomous weapons could threaten regional balance and affect overall progress made in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation. We believe that such weapons should be banned before they can be manufactured. Therefore, we believe that it would be appropriate for the next Review Conference to consider convening a meeting of governmental experts that could identify the elements required to develop an international convention.

Due to time constraints, I will conclude my statement here and make it available to all representatives.

Mrs. Pobee (Ghana): I join previous speakers in congratulating you, Sir, and the other members of the Bureau on your elections. We have confidence

that, under your able leadership, the work of the First Committee will be brought to a successful conclusion.

Ghana associates itself with the statements delivered on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and the Group of African States (see A/C.1/71/PV.2).

Of all the known threats to global peace and security, arguably the most dangerous is the proliferation and potential use of nuclear weapons. Four and half decades after the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) came into force, we have yet to take significant steps forward towards a world free of nuclear weapons. With the slow pace of progress in disarmament negotiations and the continued investment in the upgrade of existing nuclear arsenals, the vision of nuclear disarmament seems far from realization.

Ghana therefore strongly advocates a renewal of international commitment to the NPT, which remains the cornerstone of the global nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament regime. Its universality, legal commitment and safeguards for the development, acquisition, possession and use of nuclear weapons undergird its strength. As we proceed to the next review cycle of the NPT, we urge the international community to address the challenges that thwarted our efforts to agree on an outcome document during the 2015 NPT Review Conference.

The establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones is an important and concrete contribution to nuclear disarmament. For that reason, we welcome renewed efforts to seek a common way forward towards the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction. We call on all States in the region to show political will and flexibility in order to bridge divergent views and to ensure the convening of the conference, which should have been held in 2012.

Our collective security also demands that States ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). As we mark the twentieth anniversary of the CTBT's adoption, we call on all States, particularly those whose ratification is needed for its entry into force, to do so as soon as possible.

The negotiation of a fissile material cut-off treaty remains critical in view of its potential benefits to strengthening the non-proliferation regime and reducing the risk of nuclear terrorism. Ghana advocates a universal and effectively verifiable treaty banning the

production of fissile material for use in nuclear or other nuclear explosive devices. We must review nuclear doctrines and take steps to reduce the risk of intentional or accidental use of nuclear weapons, including through their de-alerting and de-targeting. Ghana joins the call for the nuclear-weapon States to pursue and conclude a universal, unconditional and legally binding instrument that provides negative security assurances to non-nuclear weapon States, pending the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

Ghana supports the recommendations of the Open-ended Working Group taking forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations, including the call for the convening of a conference by the General Assembly to begin negotiations for a universal and legally binding instrument prohibiting the use of nuclear weapons and leading to their total elimination. We believe that that will be a step forward and will assist in establishing general prohibitions and obligations, as well as the political commitment to achieving and maintaining a world without nuclear weapons. The initiative taken by a cross-regional group of Member States to introduce a draft resolution on the matter at this current session is a welcome development in that regard, and Ghana looks forward to actively participating in discussions on the subject.

The threat that weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) pose to humankind and the environment is of serious concern to the international community. We urge all States to continue to strengthen national measures to prevent non-State actors, especially terrorists, from acquiring weapons of mass destruction, the materials and technologies related to their manufacture, and their means of delivery. In the meantime, Ghana welcomes the successful conclusion of the open consultations on the comprehensive review of the status of the implementation of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004), held in New York in June. We applaud the leadership shown by Malaysia in organizing the open debate of the Council on challenges in addressing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, their means of delivery and related materials, held on 23 August (see S/PV.7776). We are hopeful that recommendations from those meetings will inform concrete action to prevent non-State actors from acquiring weapons of mass destruction. We share the view that ultimately the best way to prevent non-State actors from acquiring and using WMDs is by eliminating nuclear weapons,

destroying chemical weapons and strengthening the prohibition against biological weapons.

On the issue of conventional weapons, Ghana welcomes the successful convening of the sixth Biennial Meeting of States, held in June, to consider the national, regional and global implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. We are of the view that the inclusion of ammunition in the Programme of Action is of critical importance. The issue of curbing the illicit flow of ammunition must be taken seriously, since the real value of small arms and light weapons depends upon the availability of ammunition. It is hoped that the matter will be given serious consideration and effectively addressed at the third Review Conference, in 2018. Meanwhile, we are gratified to note that the sixth Biennial Meeting encouraged States to develop national-level indicators based on the Programme of Action and the International Tracing Instrument that could be used to measure progress in implementing Sustainable Development Goal target 16.4, to significantly reduce illicit arms flows by 2030.

We have also taken note of the important decisions taken at the second Conference of the States Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), held in Geneva in August, including the adoption of parameters for a voluntary trust fund and the setting up of working groups on transparency and reporting, implementation and universalization, which will no doubt facilitate the work of the ATT.

I cannot conclude my statement without a mention of the valuable contribution of women to practical disarmament measures at the local, regional and international levels and the need to support their full and meaningful participation in, and access to, all policymaking, planning and implementation processes related to arms control and disarmament. We call for increased technical assistance and capacity-building in support of mainstreaming gender perspectives in disarmament, non-proliferation and arms-control processes, particularly in developing countries.

In conclusion, may I express Ghana's fervent hope that the seventy-first session will witness a reaffirmation of our collective commitment and resolve to achieve progress on all fronts in the area of disarmament, in the interests of humankind and international security.

Mr. Elmajerbi (Libya) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as Chair of the First Committee. We are fully confident that, with your competence and wisdom, we will achieve the best results possible. I should also like to congratulate the other members of the Bureau. We assure you, Sir, of my delegation's full cooperation.

We would like to associate ourselves with the statements made, respectively, by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, the representative of Nigeria on behalf of the Group of African States and the representative of Tunisia on behalf of the Group of Arab States (see A/C.1/71/PV.2).

Libya fully respects all of its commitments on nuclear disarmament and international instruments. We continue to collaborate in full transparency with the international community in order to implement all international conventions and protocols regarding nuclear disarmament. We are fully aware of the magnitude of the devastation that could result from the use of weapons of mass destruction and the fact that their devastating radioactive effects could last for years. We are aware of the number of victims and injuries that could result from their use. That is why we abandoned our own programme in 2003. Our decision to prohibit the use of such lethal weapons is a veritable success story and an initiative that could be followed by others. The Committee could well imagine the situation in Libya today had nuclear weapons been employed — and such a scenario is not one exclusive to Libya alone. There are many conflicts going on, and if any of the parties to them had possessed nuclear weapons or weapons of mass destruction, members could very well imagine what the results would have been. Yet today we continue to see the threat of the use of such lethal weapons.

The total elimination of nuclear weapons is the only guarantee of the non-use or threat of use of such weapons. We note that, thus far, the international community has failed to achieve that goal. My delegation calls upon all the nuclear-weapon States to eliminate their nuclear arsenals and to stop developing new types of weapons, in accordance with the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), and reminds all parties to the Treaty to respect their commitments. Libya also calls for a legally binding international instrument to assure non-nuclear-weapon States from the use or the threat of use of such weapons,

pursuant to General Assembly resolutions and in line with the advisory opinion (A/51/218, annex) handed down by the International Court of Justice in 1996.

We are deeply concerned about the devastating effects of the use of nuclear weapons and their humanitarian effects. We are fully aware that no organization or country is capable of addressing a humanitarian emergency situation arising from the detonation of a nuclear weapon. We call on all countries to join the Humanitarian Pledge, which has been supported by 127 countries so far, including Libya. We welcome resolution 70/48, on the Humanitarian Pledge for the prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons. We also commend the Open-ended Working Group taking forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations, according to resolution 70/33. We welcome the agreement reached to convene a conference in 2017 on developing a legally binding international instrument for the prohibition of nuclear weapons, following a 20-year stalemate in that regard. We call upon all nuclear-weapon States to join those negotiations and demonstrate full, serious political will.

The NPT is the cornerstone of the nuclear non-proliferation regime. We renew our full commitment to the Treaty and its three pillars — non-proliferation, disarmament and the use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. We also stress the inalienable right of countries and parties to the Treaty to develop research, production and use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes in accordance with articles I and II of the Treaty. Despite our full commitment to the NPT and endeavours to achieve its universality, we were disappointed, like all other countries, to see the 2015 NPT Review Conference unable to reach consensus in view of the attempts by some countries to hamper the draft outcome document surrounding the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East.

In that regard, in spite of all the General Assembly resolutions adopted since 1974, the Security Council resolutions and the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice, today more than ever we must work towards the full elimination and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. We must insist on the universality of the NPT and the International Atomic Energy Agency's safeguards regime. Libya is an active party to all the relevant treaties and conventions and has joined the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological Weapons Convention. We believe that it is only through international cooperation that we can

achieve our common goals. We have fully cooperated with the Chemical Weapons Convention in order to take the necessary measures to dispose of all category 1 substances, and we are fully committed to all our obligations.

The multilateral framework is the only way to address disarmament and international security issues. It is vital, now more than ever, to activate and implement frameworks and mechanisms. We insist on the development of multilateral disarmament treaties. The Conference on Disarmament is also at a standstill because of the lack of political will of some of the parties. Once again, we insist on the implementation of the relevant international resolutions and the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice. We emphasize the important role played by the United Nations Disarmament Commission, the only body that addresses recommendations on disarmament. We also express our deep concern regarding the standstill in any area of the Commission's work.

In conclusion, we assure you, Sir, of Libya's cooperation and contribution to international peace, security and stability.

Mr. Sevilla Borja (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, on behalf of the delegation of Ecuador, I would like to congratulate you, Sir, as well as the other members of the Bureau, on your elections. I assure you of our support as you discharge your duties.

The delegation of Ecuador associates itself with the statement made by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/71/PV.2).

In its Constitution, Ecuador acknowledges the rights of nature, with the aim of their being wholly respected. The Constitution of Ecuador also declared its national territory to be a zone of peace, thereby guaranteeing its inhabitants an opportunity to live in a healthy environment. Likewise — and we take pride in stating this — the Heads of State and Government of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States have declared the entire region of Latin American and Caribbean, our great homeland, to be a zone of peace. Ecuador therefore condemns the existence of weapons of mass destruction on the face of the Earth and believes that their use or threat of use is a crime against nature and humankind.

Like the vast majority of other States, Ecuador believes that nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation are, and should be, parallel processes that dovetail and are interrelated. My country, which is a non-nuclear-weapon State, has met, and will continue to honour, its international obligations in the area of nuclear non-proliferation. In doing so, it has expected, and will continue to expect, that the nuclear-weapon States will also honour their nuclear-disarmament commitments. Nonetheless, to date, Ecuador deplores the fact that they have not yet fulfilled that obligation. We therefore support the proposal for the General Assembly to convene next year a process to negotiate a treaty prohibiting nuclear weapons, with a view to their complete elimination. It is clear such a legally binding international instrument will not make such weapons disappear into thin air, but it is an indispensable tool that will provide the legal basis for nuclear disarmament and begin to proffer an effective response to humankind's long-held desire to rid itself of these horrific weapons, whose perverse effects on humankind are increasingly evident. Ecuador is therefore fulfilling its obligations under article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).

In the past decades, the regrettable stalemate in the various bodies of the disarmament machinery and the need to rebuild bridges of dialogue and harmony among States in the area of disarmament make convening a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament as soon as possible a requirement. We therefore express our satisfaction with the smooth progress of the Open-ended Working Group that was established to reconcile the objectives and agenda of the fourth special session. We urge that such work be continued with the same positive spirit next year.

Ecuador reiterates its commitment to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and its three pillars, which must be implemented in a balanced manner, without discrimination or double standards. We therefore regret that there was no consensus to adopt the draft outcome document of the 2015 NPT Review Conference, due to disagreement on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East — a goal that, we should recall, is an integral part of the decisions of the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference. At the same time, I wish to highlight my delegation's dissatisfaction with the fact that the chapter on nuclear disarmament in the draft outcome document, which was circulated in the last

few hours of the Conference, lacked ambitious targets in that field. It was, in fact, even more inadequate than the outcome document of the 2010 Review Conference, whose conclusions and recommendations are mostly yet to be fulfilled.

In its capacity as a contracting party to the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean — also known as the Treaty of Tlatelolco — which established the first such zone in a densely populated region and whose fiftieth anniversary we celebrate next year, Ecuador wishes to urge the signatories of the Protocols of the Treaty to withdraw a unilateral interpretative statements made at the time of the signing of the Protocols, which affect the status of denuclearization established by the Treaty. In that context, we would also like to urge all States to make efforts to establish and consolidate other nuclear-weapon-free zones in all regions of the planet, so as to achieve the loftier goal of general and complete disarmament.

In a disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation context, Ecuador expresses its support for the early entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), and states that the development and improvement of the capabilities of nuclear weapons through subcritical explosions and other procedures are contrary to the objectives and purposes of the Treaty. The entry into force of the CTBT will occur when the annex 2 States that have not already done so ratify the Treaty, and not through resolutions issued by bodies that have little or nothing to do with its operation. In that connection, Ecuador reiterates its rejection of all nuclear tests.

With regard to other weapons of mass destruction, and based on the principles previously mentioned, the delegation of Ecuador wishes to reiterate its full commitment to the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological Weapons Convention, and condemns the use of such weapons, wherever and by whomever. Ecuador calls for their total elimination, thereby fulfilling the commitments made under those Conventions and eliminating such weapons within the deadlines set and without further delay or postponement.

In the area of conventional weapons, Ecuador shares and strongly supports the objectives of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. In that context, Ecuador welcomes the

results of the sixth Biennial Meeting of States Parties, held this year, to consider the national, regional and global implementation of the Programme of Action.

Ecuador is party to the Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition, supplementing the Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. Ecuador has also ratified the Convention on Cluster Munitions, whose universalization it deems to be a priority, as such weapons are especially barbaric in nature and their deleterious effects are felt in particular by the most vulnerable groups. It is for that reason that we welcome Palau's ratification of, and Cuba's accession to, that instrument. In addition, considering that civilian populations are the main victims of the use of such weapons, Ecuador wishes to reiterate its commitment and support to the Convention on the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and Their Destruction.

My country also expresses concern about the increasing use, development and refinement of unmanned aerial vehicles, as well as the use of lethal autonomous weapons. The use of such new military technologies brings with it serious humanitarian, moral and legal concerns. Therefore, the international community, in its various regional and global forums, should continue to emphasize their implications for international humanitarian law, which should include provisions banning such weapons. In that regard, we support efforts within the framework of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and believe that merely regulating their international trade is not sufficient.

Security in international relations should be based on trust and respect among States. The revelations about a massive and indiscriminate communication system of espionage that monitors all of the world's citizens and the use, contrary to international law, of information and communications technology, which in particular undermines the principles of respect for sovereignty and non-interference in the internal affairs of States, are actions that inject a serious element of instability into the relations between States and affect international security.

In conclusion, I am honoured to convey the commitment of the Government of Ecuador to peace, global disarmament and international security within a

framework of full respect for international law, human rights and the Charter of the United Nations.

Mr. Moustafa (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): First of all, I would like to congratulate you, Sir, on chairing the First Committee during the seventy-first session. We are delighted and honoured that a brotherly Arab State is in that position, and we are confident that you will engage in the judicious management of our work. That will help to make our session on disarmament and international security a successful one. My delegation assures you of its support.

My delegation endorses the statements made, respectively, on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, the Group of Arab States, the Group of African States and the New Agenda Coalition (see A/C.1/71/PV.2).

This session of the First Committee is taking place amid many challenges to the non-proliferation and disarmament regime. Today's meeting is an important opportunity to assess the implementation of the commitments made by the international community in disarmament treaties and non-proliferation instruments, especially after the failure of the 2015 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). This is also an opportunity to consider ways by which we can identify a new approach — one that ensures a proper balance among the Treaty's three pillars.

Despite the fact that the international community is aware of the danger of the use or potential use of nuclear weapons as a deterrent, the nuclear disarmament regime is struggling when it comes to article VI. International peace and security are therefore facing an increasing threat of the use of nuclear weapons. Therefore, 26 September should be observed as the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons throughout the world. Egypt supports that day and has always promoted the implementation of the 13 nuclear disarmament measures agreed at the 2000 NPT Review Conference. We would also encourage the implementation of the 2010 Review Conference's Action Plan.

The lack of the necessary political will to implement those commitments has perpetuated the threat posed to international peace and security by the potential use of nuclear weapons. The unjustified measures taken by two nuclear-weapon States during the 2015 Review Conference to break international agreement showed

contempt for the text of the Treaty and undermined the Conference's draft final outcome document, as those States did not meet their commitments. Egypt supports the Open-ended Working Group to convene a conference to draft a legally binding convention for the prevention of nuclear weapons. We would like to reiterate some past truths.

The indefinite extension of the NPT in no way means that the nuclear-weapon States should continue to possess nuclear weapons on a permanent basis. That is in line with the letter and spirit of the Treaty and its main objectives. Egypt is concerned about the focus adopted by the nuclear-weapon States in terms of developing new nuclear weapons. Those States seem to be modernizing nuclear weapons and conducting studies in order to do so. In that context, Egypt rejects the joint statement made last month by the five nuclear-weapon States, which speaks of preserving the nuclear stockpiles and nuclear weapons held by those States. That is in contradiction to the NPT and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

Non-nuclear-weapon States wish to exercise their rights with regard to the peaceful use of nuclear energy, in line with article IV of the NPT. That right must be interpreted in an appropriate manner and impose more constraints on the nuclear-weapon States, in particular with regard to verification and guarantees. We cannot force a signatory State to sign the an additional protocol as a precondition for providing nuclear material to such States, or propose new initiatives to limit their room for manoeuvre. Any new constraint will be considered to be a voluntary commitment and not a binding commitment for the other States.

The transfer of nuclear technologies for peaceful purposes and technical cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) is an established right for Member States. To date, however, that right has not been fully explored by non-nuclear weapon States. Some States are seeking to impose constraints on non-nuclear weapon States that are parties to the Treaty with regard to accessing nuclear materials and equipment for the development of peaceful nuclear programmes. Egypt has made progress in building a new nuclear-energy power plant in order to meet its growing development needs in the scientific, agricultural, medical and water and sanitation fields. We are coordinating with the IAEA to ensure that our measures are in line with the nuclear safety and security measures approved by the Agency.

Despite the fact that 20 years have passed since the resolution on the Middle East was adopted during the 1995 NPT Review Conference, which is considered to be the legal foundation for the Treaty's unlimited extension, it has not yet been implemented, in particular because of the decision to postpone the 2012 conference. That decision was taken unilaterally without any justification or consultation with the countries in the region. Holding a conference on that issue has never been an end in itself, but rather a way to implement the 1995 resolution in order to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. That can only strengthen the effectiveness and global nature of the NPT, in particular in the area of nuclear disarmament. New ideas would be required in order to break the deadlock. The Non-Aligned Movement has asked the Secretary-General, through the Arab document of the 2015 NPT Review Conference, to convene a conference to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. That conference could also set up a technical mechanism in which everyone could participate in order to negotiate a regional legally binding treaty establishing a weapons free zone.

Egypt reiterates its reservation with regard to the Arms Trade Treaty, based in particular on the principles we cited. We reject the politicization of, and any threats to, acquired rights.

We reiterate our positive stance with regard to the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects.

With regard to disarmament, we eagerly await the outcome of the Open-ended Working Group on disarmament.

With respect to the increasing threats to the international community, we reiterate Egypt's national guidelines regarding space security, in particular joint ownership of space, the equitable use of space, the peaceful use of space and international space cooperation.

We note that the relevant Group of Governmental Experts has been meeting on the issue of technical progress in the area of information and communications technology in international security field. Cybersecurity is crucial today, in particular with the political and social progress being made.

In conclusion, Egypt has a role and a growing interest in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation. We will make every effort to achieve positive results during this session in order to usher in a new era of international efforts in the area of disarmament and international security.

Mr. Manongi (United Republic of Tanzania): I thank you, Mr. Chair, and commend you and the other members of the Bureau on your well-deserved election.

On 26 September, we observed the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons. Yet again, the First Committee's session opens with no meaningful global disarmament having taken place over the years. Regrettably, the nuclear-weapon States and their nuclear-dependent allies continue to rely heavily on nuclear weapons in their security doctrines and to invest billions of dollars upgrading and modernizing their arsenals. Although progress towards our collective disarmament goals has been slow, and sometimes indeed painful, we have not lost confidence in the role of the United Nations in controlling and eliminating nuclear arms as a way towards achieving international peace and security. To us, disarmament and development are not unrelated. The amount of resources deployed for military expenditure could make significant contributions to securing the promise of the Sustainable Development Goals. It is for that reason that the work of the Committee is important to us.

We see that the scope and magnitude of the humanitarian consequences caused by nuclear weapons are catastrophic and more complex than understood in the context of development. It is in that regard that we call upon the nuclear-weapon States to fully comply with their legal obligations and undertakings to accomplish the total elimination of nuclear weapons without further delay, in a transparent, irreversible and internationally verifiable manner and under the regime established by the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). We also continue to demand that the non-nuclear-weapon States be provided with universal, unconditional, non-discriminatory and legally binding assurances by all the nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons under any circumstances.

The United Republic of Tanzania continues to stress that the International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards are a fundamental component of the NPT that help to create an environment conducive to nuclear

cooperation. Therefore, they should be implemented without affecting the rights of States to develop research, production and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy without discrimination. We also stress that the NPT should not serve as a tool to regulate only the non-nuclear-weapon States. It should also not be used as camouflage for placing stringent conditions on the transfer of nuclear technology for peaceful uses to developing countries. The benefits of nuclear technology should not, and cannot, be for the exclusive use of the nuclear Powers alone.

The United Republic of Tanzania is a State party to the African Nuclear Free Zone Treaty — the Pelindaba Treaty. The Treaty provides an important framework for strengthening the non-proliferation regime in Africa and the world at large. We therefore support the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones in other regions as well.

The proliferation and misuse of small arms and light weapons is a matter that also concerns us deeply. In the Great Lakes region of Africa and other places on the continent, they are a source of great suffering and devastation and undermine social and economic development for countries and citizens. Illicit transfers of such weapons have helped transnational organized criminals, including terrorists. It is for those reasons that we continue to believe that an effective Arms Trade Treaty will not only contribute to a responsible regime for transferring small arms and light weapons but will also give peace a chance in regions and to people that have known little else.

In conclusion, allow me to restate the view of the United Republic of Tanzania that multilateral diplomacy and solid political will from Member States are important to achieving general and complete disarmament.

Mr. Morro Villacián (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): Like previous delegations, I would also like to congratulate you, Sir, and your country, Algeria, on your election as Chair of the First Committee. Rest assured that you have the support of the delegation of Spain in the successful completion of our work.

Spain aligns itself with the statements made yesterday by the observer of the European Union (EU) (see A/C.1/71/PV.2).

In that same vein, we would like to reiterate our firm commitment to multilateralism and to the United Nations, as well as to the collective treaties and initiatives

undertaken to promote disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control. That commitment has been reflected in the past two years in the work that Spain has been undertaking as Chair of the three Security Council non-proliferation committees, namely, the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1718 (2006), the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1540 (2004) and as facilitator of resolution 2231 (2015).

Spain once again underscores the importance of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) as the main reference in the international non-proliferation regime and the foundation for advancing nuclear disarmament and developing the uses of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes — the underlying aspects of the Treaty's three pillars. In that regard, we would like to reiterate the call for the universality of the NPT and urge the countries that are not parties to join the Treaty.

Spain vigorously condemns the two nuclear tests carried out this year by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, which is a flagrant violation of various Security Council resolutions. Those tests are in addition to the repeated ballistic missile launches conducted in the past few months, which is a very serious threat to international peace and security and to the stability of the Korean peninsula. That is why we call on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to comply with Security Council resolutions and to again turn to applying the provisions of the NPT. As Chair of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1718 (2006), Spain reiterates the importance of the correct implementation of resolutions, in particular resolution 2270 (2016).

We express our satisfaction at the adequate implementation of the nuclear agreement between the EU3+3 and Iran, which ensures the peaceful use of the Iranian nuclear programme. As facilitator of resolution 2231 (2015), Spain calls on all parties to continue working towards the full and effective implementation of that resolution.

We regret that no agreement has been reached on the convening of a conference on the establishment of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems in the Middle East. We reiterate our support for the 1995 resolution and the agreements reached at the 2010 NPT Review Conference. We encourage all parties to demonstrate real political will to engage in dialogue and reach consensus that would

allow for that conference to be convened as soon as possible and with all the countries of the region present.

We must highlight once again the need to comply with the provisions of article VI of the NPT in the area of nuclear disarmament, with a particular focus on the responsibility of the States with the largest arsenals. My country, like many others, has participated in the Open-ended Working Group taking forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations, established pursuant to resolution 70/33 to advance multilateral negotiations on nuclear disarmament. Spain regrets that it was not possible to reach a consensus in the Group because the recommendations included in the report (see A/71/371) did not reflect the sentiments of many of the countries, including my own country. Today's debate highlights the urgent need to launch a genuine process of nuclear disarmament and also to take into consideration security issues that we believe should be addressed in a realistic manner, within the framework of the NPT and with the participation of the nuclear Powers.

We express our firm support for the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva, as the sole organ established to negotiate multilateral disarmament treaties. We deplore the fact that the Conference has been at a standstill for so many years and the lack of progress in disarmament negotiations, including those on a future fissile material cut-off treaty. A decisive step forward in the disarmament process would be the prompt entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty that was adopted 20 years ago. We call on the countries that have not yet signed or ratified it, in particular the annex 2 countries, to do so as soon as possible.

Just a few days ago, my country, Spain, co-sponsored Security Council resolution 2310 (2016), which we view as another step towards the total delegitimization of nuclear tests by the international community. As we understand it, it would help to strengthen the prohibition of nuclear tests as a de facto international norm. Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) is an extremely important instrument because it seeks to prevent non-State actors, including terrorist groups, from obtaining access to weapons of mass destruction, nuclear, chemical and biological weapons. Spain, as Chair of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1540 (2004), is working to strengthen the effective implementation of this resolution through its global review, which should be completed this year. Its report will be presented in the Security Council in November. The ultimate goal is to adopt another

resolution that would allow the instruments of the resolution and the Committee to be strengthened and adapted to new and increasing threats, enabling them to engage in a more effective fight against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction in the hands of non-State actors, such as terrorist groups.

In that context, in April Spain took part in the fourth Nuclear Security Summit — a process that is highly relevant to the international community's efforts to prevent nuclear terrorism. To honour that commitment, my country will participate in the next international nuclear-security conference that will be organized by the International Atomic Energy Agency in December. The purpose of the conference will be to strengthen physical nuclear security throughout the world and respond to threats to the safety of materials and nuclear and radioactive facilities and their transportation. Spain condemns the use of any chemical substance as a weapon by any actor, under any circumstances, and voices its concern about the findings of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism, established pursuant to Security Council resolution 2235 (2015), whose most recent report holds the Syrian regime and Da'esh responsible for carrying out chemical attacks, in breach of international humanitarian law.

The use of chemical weapons is unacceptable and those responsible for their use must be held accountable. The Security Council must shoulder its responsibility and issue a firm response. We would also like to congratulate the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons for the recent evacuation and destruction of category-2 chemical weapons from a former arsenal in Libya. That intervention in Libya is an example of the international community's success when it decides to carry out joint action.

With regard to biological weapons, Spain took part in the work of the Preparatory Committee of the Eighth Review Conference of the States Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction. We call on all parties to contribute in a constructive manner to strengthening this pillar of the non-proliferation and disarmament regime through their active participation in the Review Conference, which will be held in Geneva in November.

The second Conference of States Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty was held in August. We must continue to work towards its universalization and proper implementation. In the interest of time, we will address other issues in the thematic statements that my delegation will make in the coming days. I would like to conclude by expressing my hope that during the coming weeks the First Committee can engage in an open debate that will enable us to harmonize our positions and build greater trust. Sir, I wish you every success in your duties.

Mr. Hajnoczi (Austria): At the outset, let me congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the chairship and assure you of the full support of the Austrian delegation. Austria is aligned with the statement delivered previously on behalf of the European Union (see A/C.1/71/PV.2). I therefore intend to focus on a few questions of particular importance.

First and foremost, I want to set out our position on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. Only a couple of weeks ago, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea conducted its fifth nuclear test. That provocative act drew instant international condemnation, including from the Austrian Foreign Minister, who stated that:

“Twenty years after the opening of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty for signature, the incident underscores the urgency for that Treaty to finally enter into force. I call on all States which have not already done so and, in particular, those listed in annex 2 of the Treaty, to ratify or accede to it without delay”.

The most recent nuclear test by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is also a stark reminder that nuclear proliferation is actually happening right before our eyes. The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) rests on a careful balance between non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament. Both are equally important and closely interrelated. Major strides towards nuclear disarmament by the nuclear-possessor States would remove the stimulus for other States to acquire such weapons, directly benefiting the Treaty's non-proliferation objective.

The nuclear-disarmament obligation of article VI of the NPT has been implemented in a way that can at best be called incomplete. The justification most often heard for that lack of action is that national security cannot be guaranteed without nuclear deterrence. If that were so, then many more States would feel the need to develop

nuclear weapons. Austria does not believe that nuclear weapons bring more security. On the contrary, we see them as a threat to international security, and that also implies a threat to the national security of all States and people.

In recent years, scientists have come to the conclusion that the immediate, medium-term and long-term impact of a nuclear-weapon explosion would be significantly graver than was understood in the past. It would not be constrained by national borders but would have regional or even global effects, potentially threatening humankind's survival. That was also one of the key findings of the international conference on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons held in late 2014 in Vienna. That concern found its reflection in the so-called Humanitarian Pledge, which was launched on that occasion and has been endorsed so far by 127 countries. The Humanitarian Pledge was welcomed by resolution 70/48, and I appreciate the broad support. The resolution will be submitted as an updated draft again this year. Since the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons are an underlying basis for nuclear disarmament, Austria will sponsor the draft resolution again.

But, alas, over the past few years, we have not seen progress towards nuclear disarmament. On the contrary, modernization programmes are developing new nuclear arms with higher qualitative standards and are challenging the thresholds that made it less likely that those weapons would ever be used. Regrettably, for 20 years nothing has been negotiated on multilateral nuclear disarmament in the Conference on Disarmament. This year, relevant discussions have taken place in the Open-ended Working Group taking forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations. During this debate, many States have highlighted the anomaly that other weapons of mass destruction are prohibited, but the most dangerous one, the nuclear weapon, is not. As disarmament history has shown, weapons are eliminated only after a legally binding norm for their prohibition has been established. An increasing number of States therefore came to the conclusion that such a prohibition convention is needed, and the relevant recommendation to start such negotiations next year found broad support.

Therefore, Austria, together with Brazil, Ireland, Mexico, Nigeria, South Africa and presumably many additional countries, will sponsor a draft resolution to convene a conference in 2017, open to all States,

international organizations and civil society, to negotiate a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons, leading towards their total elimination. A draft resolution to that effect, building on last year's resolution 70/33, has already been sent to all States Members of the United Nations. Such a convention would be a core contribution towards the ultimate objective of a world free from nuclear weapons. It would constitute a basis on which the necessary system to ensure its complete and verified implementation could subsequently be established.

Many regions of the world are already nuclear-weapon-free zones today and individual States, among them Austria, have declared themselves nuclear-weapon-free. A prohibition treaty would create common standards. It is clear that it would strengthen the NPT in two decisive ways. It would bring a needed effective legal measure for the implementation of article VI and it would strengthen the non-proliferation obligations of nuclear-weapon-free States that become States parties. It has always been clear that a legally binding norm to prohibit nuclear weapons will be needed to attain and maintain a world without nuclear weapons. So let us create that legal basis for the elimination of nuclear weapons.

Austria continues to be concerned about the civilian harm caused by the use of explosive weapons in populated areas, which have become the main cause of harm to civilians in many conflicts. Worryingly, when explosive weapons have been used in populated areas, 92 per cent of the casualties have been civilians, which is more than nine out of 10. Let me add that this humanitarian problem has repercussions far beyond the immediate zones of conflict. It is the harm caused by explosive weapons that has driven most of today's refugees and internally displaced persons away from their war-ridden homes.

The gravity of this issue was underscored by the attention it received at the World Humanitarian Summit in May in Istanbul. With the explicit support of the Secretary-General, Austria and a number of other States as well as representatives from United Nations agencies, the International Committee of the Red Cross and civil society, have started to seek multilateral action on the issue. This afternoon, a meeting with other committed countries will start to discuss possible elements of an international political declaration on the protection of civilians from the use of explosive weapons in populated areas. From our point of view, strengthening

the observance of existing international humanitarian law would be one of the important objectives of such a declaration. Austria is ready to engage with delegations that are interested in learning more and will host a side event with the non-governmental coalition, the International Network on Explosive Weapons, on that issue on 6 October.

Another matter of concern for my country is the prospect of the development of lethal autonomous weapons systems. Technological progress is fast, and what seems futuristic today may be a reality tomorrow. The challenge is how to ensure that developments remain within ethical, political and legal imperatives. We welcome the broad discussions that were held on the occasion of a series of expert meetings within the framework of the Conventional Weapons Convention. We support the recommendation issued by the latest of those meetings that the forthcoming Review Conference of the Conventional Weapons Convention should establish a group of governmental experts to further deepen and intensify international debate on the issue.

Austria continues to pay special attention to the Conventions on anti-personnel mines and cluster munitions. In the relatively short time since their entry into force, both Conventions have brought huge benefits for affected countries and populations and have made rapid progress towards universalization. But much remains to be done. In line with our continuing commitment, Austria has offered to take over the presidency of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention in 2017. The success story of those two Conventions proves that multilateral efforts on disarmament can make a difference on the ground, even though they met with great resistance in the beginning. On that positive note I would like to conclude my remarks.

Mr. Ulyanov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): This year's session of the First Committee promises to be a very substantive and intense one. One can predict that nuclear disarmament will be the focus of our attention. Russia has much to say on that issue, since our country has been very actively engaged in the process over the past 30 years, not only in word but also in deed. Thanks to the joint efforts of Russia and the United States during that time, the nuclear arms race was not only stopped; it was reversed.

Compared with the time when the Cold War was at its peak, Russia's strategic nuclear forces have been

reduced by 85 per cent and its tactical nuclear weapons by 75 per cent. Moreover, tactical nuclear weapons have been reassigned to a non-deployed status. That is the most significant de-alerting measure in the history of the world. To give the Committee the full picture, we would add that, in the period from 2010 to 2015 alone, the number of operationally deployed nuclear warheads in Russia decreased by 2.5 times. That is 2.5 times within a five-year period — down from 3,900 to approximately 1,580 units.

Genuine nuclear disarmament continues during the current session of the General Assembly. The relevant Russian agencies, structures and experts undertake tremendous efforts on a daily basis to achieve the levels defined by the New START Treaty, by 5 February 2018. That requires considerable financial expenses that we must incur despite the current difficult economic situation. Against that backdrop, the statements often delivered at multilateral forums, including in the First Committee, to the effect that nuclear disarmament is allegedly being conducted too slowly or is facing a serious crisis do not reflect reality.

I will be frank in my remarks. It is offensive to hear such statements, especially given the fact that Russia has spent billions of dollars on disarmament, with tens of thousands of Russian specialists involved in nuclear disarmament. Yet, it is being said that disarmament is not taking place. For that reason, I believe that we have grounds for saying that such claims offer a clear example of propaganda. They are not in line with reality and they seek to justify new, increasingly unrealistic demands. That trend reached its peak with the idea of imposing an immediate ban on nuclear weapons, and a great deal of intrigue will surround that idea in the coming few weeks. We believe that that is totally counterproductive, and I will attempt to explain why.

First, it fundamentally breaks with the established process for conducting multilateral work on nuclear disarmament, which to date has been carried out within the framework of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). It has been proposed that the ban on nuclear weapons, which is the most sensitive part of this issue, be discussed at an alternative international forum. We are right to ask ourselves how that will affect discussions on nuclear weapons during the new NPT review cycle. Removal from the purview of the NPT is a serious issue. This is something new, and we need to consider what its impact would be. In our opinion, it seems that, in such circumstances, there will inevitably

be negative consequences for the viability and integrity of the NPT.

Let us recall that, in line with the NPT, the nuclear weapons possessed by the five nuclear Powers are absolutely legitimate. All the States parties to the Treaty signed it and their national Parliaments ratified it. There is now a proposal to have a new international agreement, with more limited membership, that would outlaw nuclear weapons. As a result, two parallel legal regimes with mutually exclusive provisions on the status of nuclear weapons could emerge. Is there any possibility of resolving that direct conflict without damaging the NPT? We strongly recommend that everyone give the matter second thoughts before voting to convene a conference to draft a convention that would prohibit nuclear weapons.

Secondly, the hasty conclusion of an agreement on a ban would be contrary to the consensus provisions of the 2010 NPT Review Conference Action Plan. According to that Action Plan, nuclear disarmament should be carried out in a way that promotes international stability, peace and security. Instead of the balanced approach established in the Action Plan, we are now being asked to abandon strategic stability considerations and to isolate the nuclear-weapons-ban issue, removing it from the context of nuclear disarmament. If we follow basic logic, that issue would have been examined only in the final stage of building a nuclear-weapon-free world, to ensure the irreversibility of the process. One can therefore hardly call that approach realistic. We are categorically opposed to disregarding the consensus provisions of the 2010 action plan and to any attempt to revise them.

Thirdly, even from a purely practical point of view, an initiative to ban nuclear weapons seems extremely dubious. It might have made sense if and only if all nuclear-weapon States had been ready to take part. But they are not prepared to do so. Russia, for one, will definitely not participate in any endeavour that is unrealistic or conflicts with existing understandings and arrangements. There is every reason to believe that other nuclear Powers will follow suit. As a result, the proposed conference would lose all practical meaning. However, it would be far from harmless. Mechanically coercing nuclear-weapon States to abandon nuclear weapons without taking due account of their strategic realities and legitimate security interests would hardly represent progress towards a common goal. Rather, it would lead to disintegration and polarization or even to

direct antagonism between the proponents of different points of view. The very inconclusive results of the August vote in the Open-ended Working Group taking forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations, in which more than a third of its participants either abstained or voted against the hasty start of negotiations on the prohibition of nuclear arsenals, serve as proof of that statement.

We greatly respect and understand the opinion of those who call for nuclear weapons to be abandoned. We also share the noble goal of a world free of nuclear weapons, and Russia has made announcements to that effect on numerous occasions at the highest level. However, the question is, how do we embark on a path towards that goal without undermining strategic stability, damaging the system of checks and balances in international relations, plunging the world into chaos and dangerous unpredictability, threatening the integrity of the NPT regime and deepening, even unintentionally, the differences of opinion on this very sensitive issue? We believe that, instead of prioritizing a ban on nuclear weapons, which would be an act of pure propaganda, we should jointly create the conditions that would safely pave the way for nuclear disarmament.

As an example of focused efforts in that area, on 25 June in Beijing the leaders of Russia and China signed a joint statement on strengthening global strategic stability. We urge all other States to join the Russian-Chinese effort. We also call on everyone not to yield to the unrealistic temptation to attempt to resolve all nuclear-weapon issues at one fell swoop. In the interest of our cause, we must adhere to proven approaches that have already made it possible to reduce the world's stockpiles of nuclear weapons more than fivefold. It would be unforgivable, even if it were undertaken with the best intentions in the world, to add new obstacles to nuclear disarmament to the existing ones.

Because of time constraints, I will not read out the rest of my statement. However, it includes some very important points, which I will simply enumerate. They are the prevention of an arms race in space; anti-missile defence, including anti-ballistic-missile systems in Romania, Poland and South Korea; the violation of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty; European security and the policies of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, in particular those pertaining to nuclear weapons; conventional weapons control in Europe, with regard to a recent article by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Germany; a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the

Middle East; and Russia's initiative aimed at breaking the deadlock in the Conference on Disarmament.

Our full statement will be posted on the First Committee's website, for those who wish to read it.

Mr. Matjila (South Africa): My delegation would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your appointment as Chair of the First Committee and wishes to assure you of our full support and cooperation.

We would also like to associate ourselves with the statements delivered previously on behalf of the Group of African States, the Non-Aligned Movement and the New Agenda Coalition (see A/C.1/71/PV.2).

As we meet again for yet another session of the First Committee, this platform provides us with an opportunity to reflect on the progress achieved during the past year. While we welcome the progress made in some areas, we are deeply aware of the daunting work that still remains in strengthening international security and disarmament in general. We remain concerned about the continuing impasse in the disarmament machinery. The 20-year stalemate in the Conference on Disarmament and the lack of agreement in the Disarmament Commission for many years have had a negative impact on multilateralism and the multilateral system of governance.

It is evident that the lack of progress on nuclear disarmament in particular is a source of growing frustration among the vast majority of the States Members of the United Nations. Achievements in the area of nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation remain especially uneven. The regime established by the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is constantly reaffirmed by the majority of the international community, and many creative measures have been introduced to strengthen nuclear non-proliferation. Yet nuclear-disarmament obligations and commitments continue to be subjected to reinterpretation and further conditions. That is not acceptable. The argument that nuclear weapons are indispensable for the security of some States but not for others is not only illogical but lacks credibility. The resistance of the States possessing nuclear weapons to fulfilling their disarmament obligations and commitments has caused serious divisions among States and created a credibility crisis in the nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation regime.

The Open-ended Working Group taking forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations provided an inclusive platform for us all to seek effective measures to achieve and maintain a world free of nuclear weapons. Despite the concerted efforts of virtually all participants to achieve a consensus outcome, one State regrettably decided to break consensus on the report (see A/71/371). In the end, the Group adopted its report by an overwhelming majority. Among other important recommendations, the report recommends that the General Assembly convene a conference in 2017 to commence negotiations on a treaty prohibiting nuclear weapons. Such a treaty is a practical and achievable interim step to fill a glaring gap in the international legal architecture pertaining to the legality of nuclear weapons.

In the area of chemical weapons, South Africa welcomes the progress made by the relevant States parties to destroy their chemical weapons stockpiles, abandoned chemical weapons and old chemical weapons. We remain deeply concerned about the reported use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic. In the area of biological weapons, South Africa looks forward to the upcoming Review Conference, which we hope will achieve an outcome that would strengthen the Biological Weapons Convention and its implementation. No cause could ever justify the use of any weapon of mass destruction, anywhere, by any actor, under any circumstances.

Regarding conventional weapons, South Africa, as a State party to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention and the Convention on Cluster Munitions, will play its part on the journey towards a world free of both anti-personnel mines and cluster munitions. We encourage the States that have not yet done so, in particular those possessing such weapons, to join the aforementioned instruments without delay. We call on the States in a position to do so to assist requesting States in their national implementation efforts and to provide assistance to the victims of such weapons.

South Africa continues to believe that the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects represents the central, universally agreed set of undertakings to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. Apart from national implementation efforts, the full implementation of the entire Programme of Action, including those provisions

related to international cooperation and assistance, remains of critical importance. Likewise, we welcome the outcome of the second Conference of State Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty and look forward to the full implementation of the Treaty in regulating international trade in conventional arms and in contributing to curbing illicit transfers.

My delegation stands ready to participate actively in the work of this year's First Committee and to join you, Sir, and other delegations in making a success of our work.

Mr. Meza-Cuadra (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): Let me first express satisfaction at seeing you, Sir, preside over the work of the First Committee and to convey cordial greetings to the members of the Bureau and the Secretariat.

Peru endorses the statements delivered by the representative of the Dominican Republic on behalf of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States and by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/71/PV.2).

Peru is a country with a long tradition of promoting disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control and is part of a number of international frameworks to which we give our highest priority. In that regard, we reiterate our firm belief in and commitment to continuing to promote disarmament and international security, and we are resolutely committed to carrying out that task. As part of that commitment, my country signed the Arms Trade Treaty in September 2013 and deposited its instrument of ratification with the Secretary-General in February this year, making us the eighty-first country to complete that process.

Given the international community's concern about the manufacture, transfer and illicit trade of small arms and light weapons and their excessive accumulation and unbridled proliferation in many regions of the world, Peru wishes to reiterate its commitment to the full and effective implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action To Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and the International Tracing Instrument. My delegation stresses that work should continue at the multilateral level within the framework of the Programme of Action, in a transparent and non-discriminatory manner, and move towards the adoption of legally binding instruments on marking

and tracing and illicit brokering in order to prevent the diversion of such weapons to the illicit market. In that regard, we wish to highlight the results of the sixth Biennial Meeting of States Parties to consider the implementation of the Programme of Action, held in June, and, at the same time, congratulate the Permanent Representative of Jamaica on his important role in presiding over that process.

Disarmament and the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons represent another issue of particular interest to Peru. Our primary goal must be to achieve and maintain a world without nuclear weapons. In that regard, Peru was one of the countries to promote the establishment of Latin America and the Caribbean as the first nuclear-weapon-free zone in the world, under the Treaty of Tlatelolco. We took that firm position in order to be one of the first States to ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) in November 1997. That is because my country is aware of the special importance of this agreement as a key instrument in international efforts for the gradual reduction of nuclear weapons and the prevention of nuclear proliferation and, therefore, we welcome the ongoing progress towards the goal of universalizing that instrument. In that regard, Peru reiterates the importance of its early entry into force and urges States listed in annex 2 of the Treaty to speed up the process of signing and/or ratifying that instrument.

Peru has also joined what has been referred to as the humanitarian pledge and is aware of the serious impact that nuclear weapons and tests could have on development and the very existence of humankind. We express our desire and political resolve to prevent the recurrence of situations such as those that resulted from nuclear tests or the use of such weapons. Peru reaffirms its commitment to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the full implementation of its three pillars. It also reaffirms the inalienable right of all States to develop research, production and use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes without discrimination, in line with articles I, II, III and IV of the NPT.

In that regard, Peru maintains its firm stance in favour of the full implementation of the NPT and emphasizes the importance of achieving the universality of that instrument. It therefore urges States that have not yet done so to accede to the Treaty as non-nuclear-weapon States. We also urge the nuclear-weapon States to honour their commitments under article VI

of the Treaty and move towards the total elimination of such weapons.

My country advocates the universalization of systems aimed at banning weapons of mass destruction and reaffirms the need to move towards the goal of nuclear disarmament, to achieve and maintain a world free of nuclear weapons. In that context, we reject the improvement of existing nuclear weapons and the development of new types of weapons, which is incompatible with the commitment to nuclear disarmament. In that regard, my delegation wishes to acknowledge the work done by Thailand in Geneva, at the helm of the Open-ended Working Group taking forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations, established pursuant to resolution 70/33, which adopted, by a majority, a report (see A/71/371) with proposals to hold a conference in 2017 to negotiate a legally binding instrument to ban nuclear weapons, with a view to their complete elimination.

With regard to the issue of disarmament machinery, my delegation believes that revitalizing the Conference on Disarmament (CD) is a priority, since that forum should be the negotiating body par excellence in matters of disarmament and international security. We are very concerned that, in recent years, the States members of the CD have failed to reach an agreement on a work programme for the substantive treatment of issues. My country urges all members of the CD to show greater political will to ensure that substantive work can be started by adopting and implementing a comprehensive and balanced programme of work, in order to start negotiations and make progress on priority issues, in particular, those related to nuclear disarmament.

With effective confidence-building measures, Peru is convinced that States could move towards integrating and strengthening cooperation mechanisms and actions and continue promoting, at all levels, an environment conducive to arms control, conventional weapons control and the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, thereby enabling every State to devote more resources to economic and social development.

Once again, this year it will be up to my country to facilitate the draft resolution on the Regional Centre of the United Nations for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, headquartered in Lima. In that regard, I congratulate the Regional Centre in Lima on its thirtieth anniversary and highlight the important work being undertaken to assist

States in the region to make progress on a number of disarmament initiatives, confidence-building measures and actions to combat illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons, ammunition and explosives, which pose a serious threat to public safety in the region.

Finally, I wish to conclude by reaffirming my country's unwavering commitment to disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control. We are resolved to do our utmost to advance the work of the Committee.

Ms. Pęksa (Poland): Let me start by congratulating the Chair of the First Committee at its seventy-first session, as well as all members of the Bureau. We assure them of our full support and willingness to cooperate in fulfilling the Committee's mandate.

Poland fully associates itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union. Building upon it, I would like to comment on a couple of issues that are of particular relevance for my Government.

The dynamics of international relations and the complexity of security issues should motivate us to strengthen the existing institutions and mechanisms in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation. In our view, each institution is as sound and determined as its members. We believe that the First Committee is not an exception to that rule, as it addresses international security matters and strives for long-term solutions. We, the First Committee, are as sound as our member States. Therefore, we call on all delegations to work in an open and responsible way, respecting truth and international law and avoiding propaganda and false accusations against other member States and their allies. Let me single out a few issues and treaties that we believe are particularly relevant to our work this year.

Let me start with the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). Despite the failure of the 2015 NPT Review Conference to reach an agreement on a substantive final document, the NPT remains the cornerstone of the international system of nuclear non-proliferation, disarmament and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. It has proved its effectiveness in curbing the proliferation of nuclear weapons, while at the same time providing a sufficient legal basis for undertaking effective measures towards nuclear disarmament, under article VI of the Treaty.

Poland supports a progressive step-by-step approach to nuclear disarmament. We believe that progress in that

field cannot be achieved unless non-nuclear-weapon States and nuclear-weapon States work together on the basis of shared objectives. Any discussion must be inclusive and must take into account the legitimate security concerns and commitments of all States. We have noted with concern, therefore, the growing polarization in the debate on nuclear disarmament, including in the work of the Open-ended Working Group taking forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations in Geneva. Any new initiatives aimed at nuclear disarmament should not undermine the existing NPT regime. We must ensure that renewed consensus on the way forward is reached during the next NPT review cycle. Poland will remain actively engaged in the process, in particular by chairing the proceedings at the second session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2020 NPT Review Conference.

The twentieth anniversary of the opening for signature of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) is a reminder of the need to accelerate efforts to ensure the Treaty's early entry into force. In that context, we welcome international efforts to that end, such as the Vienna ministerial meeting and the recent meeting of the Friends of the CTBT, held recently in New York. We also welcome the adoption of Security Council resolution 2310 (2016) — of which Poland was a sponsor — and its support of the CTBT.

Therefore, we are seriously concerned about the recent nuclear tests conducted by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, which have been strongly condemned by the international community as a clear violation of international obligations and numerous Security Council resolutions. We urge the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to return to dialogue with the International Atomic Energy Agency in order to subject its nuclear programme to international control.

The ballistic missile tests conducted this year in a number of States pose serious challenges to international security. Poland strongly supports international efforts aimed at curbing the proliferation of ballistic missiles, including the adoption of The Hague Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation as a unique transparency- and confidence-building instrument against ballistic-missile proliferation. In that context, we welcome the recent accession of India to the Code of Conduct and the Missile Technology Control Regime. For its part, Poland will undertake efforts to encourage further accessions to the Code during its chairmanship from 2017 to 2018.

As we have done in previous years, Poland is once again introducing a draft resolution on the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), which underscores the exceptional role of the CWC in preventing the re-emergence of chemical weapons and fostering international cooperation and protection against chemical weapons. That is of the utmost importance today, because challenges to the implementation of the Convention remain a source of concern for the entire international community. The elimination of chemical weapons stockpiles is ongoing. Non-State actors have and may obtain greater access to toxic chemicals and employ them for terrorist purposes. And last, but not least, chemical weapons are still being used, and that constitutes a violation of and a challenge for international law. The General Assembly has to address this development and, in particular, to condemn in the strongest possible terms, the use of chemical weapons by anyone, under any circumstances.

Today, that is unfortunately no longer an abstract idea, as can be seen from the recent report of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism (see S/2016/738). But, above all, the goal of the draft resolution this year is to ensure the overall support of the international community for a world free of chemical weapons. The full implementation of the CWC, as well as its universalization, should provide a strong united message and recognition of the efforts of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. It is for those reasons that we hope the draft will again receive the support, preferably consensual, of the Committee at such a demanding time.

Like previous speakers, I will not read out my entire statement, but I would like to ask colleagues to read the section on small arms and light weapons and very important section on the Ottawa Convention. Our statement will be published on the First Committee's website.

Allow me to conclude by underscoring that Poland, as a Member State, shoulders an additional responsibility for international peace and security since we are campaigning for a non-permanent seat on the Security Council for the period 2018-2019. Our campaign's slogan — "Solidarity, responsibility, commitment" — is an important one because those are the values that we would like to bring to the work of the Security Council, while emphasizing that international

politics should be based on the force of law and not on the law of force.

Ms. Krisnamurthi (Indonesia): Let me first congratulate the Chair and members of the Bureau on their election to preside over the Committee. I assure them of my delegation's support and cooperation throughout the session.

My delegation also wishes to associate itself with the statement made by the representative of Myanmar on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and the statement made by me, as the representative of Indonesia, on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (see A/C.1/71/PV.2). I am delivering the shortened version of our statement, the full text of which is available on the First Committee web portal.

On 26 September, we witnessed a gathering of Government and civil-society representatives at the commemoration of the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons. As a co-initiator of the commemoration, Indonesia had high hopes that the annual event would continue to be effective in boosting international awareness of the danger of nuclear weapons. The event also signified the need for an urgent quest for nuclear disarmament. However, it is highly regrettable that fewer than one third of the States Members of the United Nations participated in that event.

With the continued existence of nuclear weapons, humankind remains threatened by a nuclear catastrophe — whether by design or by accident. As a strong proponent of nuclear disarmament, Indonesia expresses deep concern about the catastrophic humanitarian impact that the detonation of nuclear weapons can cause. The slow progress in nuclear disarmament underpins Indonesia's decision to support the Open-ended Working Group taking forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations. We believe that it could potentially end the ongoing impasse in those negotiations.

Therefore, Indonesia welcomes the Open-ended Working Group's final report (see A/71/371), recently adopted in Geneva in August. Indonesia supports, in particular, the Working Group's recommendation that the General Assembly convene a conference in 2017, open to all States, with the participation and contribution of international organizations and civil society, to negotiate a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons. It is our strong belief that

the negotiation of a treaty prohibiting nuclear weapons and its early conclusion are necessary and urgent. Such a treaty would not undermine the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons regime, but rather strengthen it.

Indonesia urges all representatives to uphold their respective commitments to achieve a world free of nuclear weapons. Indonesia reiterates the importance of maintaining South-East Asia as a nuclear-weapon-free zone and free from the threat of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. We call upon all States parties to the Bangkok Treaty and the nuclear-weapon States to resolve all outstanding issues pertaining to the possible signing and ratifying of the Protocol to that Treaty.

Indonesia is concerned about the immense loss of lives and property that the illegal supply and illegitimate use of conventional weapons by unauthorized actors has caused in many parts of the world. In addressing that issue, Indonesia supports the implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects.

Indonesia remains deeply disturbed about the increasing threat of the weaponization and militarization of outer space. Indonesia therefore supports the negotiations on a treaty to ban an arms race in outer space, and encourages an interim step to build trust and transparency. The negotiation of any code of conduct on outer-space activities should be consistent with the respective mandates of all relevant United Nations bodies and within the framework of the United Nations.

Indonesia would also like to express concern over the threat of cyberattacks, as well as the militarization of cyberspace. The creation of a vision and norms so that the Internet is not used as a medium or a target of cyberattacks is highly important, as clearly outlined in the 2015 report of the Group of Governmental Experts on Developments in the Field of Information and Telecommunications in the Context of International Security (see A/70/174). In that regard, Indonesia strongly supports the discussion and promotion of the use of the Internet medium for peaceful purposes and stresses the importance of norms, rules and principles for responsible behaviour by States in the field of information and telecommunications.

Indonesia remains concerned about any initiative that would erode multilateralism in the fields of

disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control. We reaffirm our intention to continue promoting multilateralism as the core principle of negotiations, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations. Let us work together resolutely to help build a safe and peaceful world for all of humankind.

Ms. Yparraguirre (Philippines): On behalf of the Philippine delegation, I congratulate the Chair and the members of the Bureau on their election to lead the First Committee at the seventy-first session and assure them of our active and constructive engagement as we work together towards realizing our shared goal of achieving international peace and security.

As we begin the work ahead of us in the First Committee, the Philippines continues to be guided by its clear and principled position, which was articulated, almost seven decades ago at the birth of this institution, by our very own then General Assembly President Carlos P. Rómulo, when he expressed to the States Members of the United Nations the view that a comprehensive agreement on nuclear disarmament could, and should, be reached through the United Nations. Since that time, the world has put in place many instruments and platforms that serve as stepping stones towards that goal — the Conference on Disarmament, the special sessions of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones in some parts of the world and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

Those instruments and platforms allow us to articulate and crystallize the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons, the threats that existing nuclear-weapon arsenals pose to the very existence of the human race, the overwhelming sentiment by the international community to achieve a global zero, and the roadblocks that remain on the path towards that goal. In all of that, the same message is reasserted — nuclear disarmament and the total elimination of nuclear weapons are the only absolute guarantee against the use or threat of nuclear weapons.

The Philippines shares the deep disappointment about the lack of progress at the nuclear-disarmament negotiating table in recent years and the unwillingness of the nuclear-weapon States to work to fill the gaps, address the weaknesses and pursue complementarities, without which the existing global nuclear-disarmament

architecture can never be made effective once and for all.

Despite those setbacks, the Philippines remains hopeful that we can achieve the goal of a nuclear-free world. To that end, we reaffirm our commitment to do our part in working with the international community to advance the nuclear-disarmament agenda. On that note, the Philippines aligns itself with the commitments of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), articulated yesterday by my colleague from Myanmar (see A/C.1/71/PV.2), to actively participating in the work of the First Committee, including on the preparations for the next NPT review cycle, the proposed conference to negotiate a nuclear ban treaty, and the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction.

The Philippines, along with ASEAN, will stand resolute in preserving our region free from nuclear weapons and from all other weapons of mass destruction. We will forge ahead with our talks with the nuclear-weapon States to resolve all outstanding issues relating to their signing and ratifying the Protocol to the Treaty on the Southeast Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone. We also encourage the full support of all Member States, particularly the nuclear-weapon States, for the ASEAN-sponsored draft resolution on the Treaty at this session. We look forward to the adoption by consensus of the draft resolution on the Treaty.

Last week, the Philippines co-organized a high-level event, along with the Permanent Missions of Morocco and Georgia, in our capacity as members of the Group of Friends of Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN) Risk Mitigation and Security Governance and in cooperation with the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute. The event was entitled “CBRN: Risk Mitigation in the Context of Combating Terrorism”. That side event was a manifestation of my country’s commitment to advancing the work of promoting awareness about the threats to international peace and security posed by the proliferation of chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear weapons, and to enabling States to counter such threats, especially against possible attacks by terrorists and extremists in the face of technological advances.

Through the platforms provided by the Biological Weapons Convention, the Chemical Weapons Convention, the NPT and Security Council resolution 1540 (2004), and through inclusive dialogue and

cooperation between Governments and stakeholders, the Philippines will continue to contribute to international efforts to fill in the gaps in the existing frameworks, in particular in addressing the role of non-State actors.

Our work here at the First Committee is a critical element in the grand design of inclusive growth, as encapsulated in the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Those Goals will be achieved only if we redirect much-needed resources from manufacturing deadly weapons to efforts that will support and ensure the dignity of persons. More important, our SDGs will become a reality only in a world that is safe from the threat of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction that could end the very existence of the human race.

Ms. Baumann (Germany): I would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the chairship of the First Committee.

Germany fully aligns itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union (see A/C.1/71/PV.2).

Achieving a safer and more secure world with fewer weapons remains a priority for Germany’s foreign and security policy. Germany is committed to the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons. In that regard, we have consistently advocated for a pragmatic step-by-step approach aimed at conditions that would allow for a continuous reduction in nuclear weapons.

For Germany, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) remains the indispensable cornerstone of the non-proliferation and disarmament architecture. We should refrain from any action that could diminish the value and effectiveness of the NPT, with its three equally important pillars. It is against that background that we see a treaty prohibiting nuclear weapons as detrimental to our joint efforts towards global zero. Such a treaty, which, from our point of view, should come at the end of the road of nuclear disarmament, would run the risk of weakening the NPT. Whatever approach is taken in the field of nuclear disarmament should follow certain principles. It must incorporate the nuclear-weapon States, take into consideration the overall security environment and be verifiable.

The Vienna agreement between the EU3+3 and Iran reached in July 2015 was a rare diplomatic success in an extremely volatile region, and it strengthens the

NPT, as the solution was found within the logic of the NPT regime. We are satisfied that International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) reports confirm that Iran is acting in compliance with its commitments. However, we are only at the beginning of the process. In the years ahead, tight monitoring and verification by the IAEA will remain crucial in order to ensure that the Vienna agreement is implemented in all its aspects.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea poses an ever-growing risk to the international community. It has conducted its fifth nuclear test and continues to test ballistic missiles. As we have repeatedly done on previous occasions, we strongly urge the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to refrain from conducting further provocative or Security Council-proscribed actions. That case shows the importance of further strengthening the existing Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. Given that there are still more than 16,000 nuclear weapons in the world, we need to push harder for progress. We call on all nuclear-weapon States to undertake the steps that will lead to further reductions in their nuclear arsenals.

For Germany, the next logical step in the direction of global zero is to start negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT). Despite new and creative efforts in 2016, we regret that it was not possible for the Conference on Disarmament (CD) to resume its work. That is why Germany believes that intermediate and preparatory steps outside the CD are necessary in order to achieve progress on a future FMCT and not to lose the momentum created by last year's Group of Governmental Experts. Another key to progress is the United States-initiated International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification, which focuses on the development of technical measures needed for the verification of nuclear disarmament.

Germany greatly appreciates and supports the international community's work in advancing the verified elimination of chemical weapons. The systematic and repeated use of chlorine as a chemical weapon in Syria, reported by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) fact-finding mission, is a clear breach of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and international law. Germany therefore welcomes the first report of the Joint Investigative Mechanism, which clearly attributed two cases of the use of chemical weapons to the Syrian regime. We look forward to another clear and detailed report by the Mechanism by the end of this month, as

well as to an unambiguous reaction on the part of the Security Council and the OPCW. The inconsistencies in Syria's declaration on its chemical-weapons programme under the CWC must also be clarified in a convincing manner. We are equally concerned by the use of sulphur mustard by Da'esh/Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant in at least one case in Syria, and probably more in Iraq. In the future, we will see OPCW play an important role in addressing the use of chemical weapons by non-State actors.

After a long period of standstill, the upcoming Review Conference on the Biological Weapons Convention is a chance to make that Convention a more efficient and effective instrument. The existing structures and institutions of the Convention require innovation and reinforcement.

Small arms and light weapons cause tremendous human suffering and are one of the root causes of displacement and migration. It is good news that Sustainable Development Goal 16.4 identifies small arms and light weapons as one of the obstacles to development and suggests methods to address that problem. German Foreign Minister Steinmeier highlighted the importance of that issue here in New York only last week in the general debate in the plenary (see A/71/PV.17). We attach great importance to the joint Group of Seven initiative with the African Union, aiming at better coordination on small arms and light weapons in the Sahel. That initiative will enhance our assistance in that region, which is heavily affected by small arms and light weapons.

Let me also address an emerging issue of great importance — lethal autonomous weapons systems. Given the speed of technological progress, it is high time that we take that issue seriously. Germany stands ready to shoulder further responsibilities in order to advance the discussions within the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons.

Let me briefly mention one last point. German Foreign Minister Steinmeier advocated a comprehensive relaunch in the area of conventional arms control in Europe, with an eye on current security threats in Europe. The aim of that initiative is to re-establish urgently needed restraint, predictability and trust and transparency, to reduce military risks and to strengthen cooperative security. Germany stands ready to engage with all interested partners that would like to contribute to security in Europe through an exploratory

and structured dialogue on the core elements of conventional arms control in Europe.

Mrs. Chartsuwan (Thailand): My delegation joins previous speakers in congratulating the Bureau on its election to the Committee and assures it of our support during this session.

Thailand aligns itself with the statement made by the Permanent Representative of Myanmar on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (see A/C.1/71/PV.2).

Since 1946, we have come to the First Committee every year to share our views on disarmament, united in our common aspiration for a peaceful and safer world. While some progress has been made, 70 years later we are indeed still confronted with the existence of indiscriminate weapons. Our collective security is constantly challenged by emerging threats from the proliferation of illicit weapons, as well as by advancements in weapons and their delivery systems. Illicit flows of weapons can further fuel conflicts and exacerbate the delicate international security situation. For a very long time, disarmament and solutions to address such challenges have required the diversion of financial and human resources from other people-centred priorities, such as social and economic development. Thailand firmly believes that, in order to sustain peace and security, States must step up their collective efforts and explore new ways to sustain our joint endeavours on disarmament and non-proliferation.

Thailand is deeply committed to non-proliferation. We implement international measures and honour obligations with rigour and make every effort to ensure that their practical implementation continues to address emerging threats. Our Nuclear Energy for Peace Act was passed in 2016 and is a reflection of our efforts. The Act empowers Thailand to ratify or become party to legal instruments related to nuclear issues, including the additional protocol to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) comprehensive safeguards agreement, the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material and its amendment, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and the International Convention for the Suppression for Acts of Nuclear Terrorism.

International cooperation also has a prominent role to play in developing and strengthening the non-proliferation regime. That is why Thailand has been actively participating in the Proliferation Security

Initiative, the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism, and the Nuclear Security Summits. As such, it is clear to Thailand that increased coordination among various non-proliferation initiatives, including international assistance and the engagement of civil society, industries and economies will benefit and optimize our efforts. Thailand looks forward to seeing those ideas reflected in this year's comprehensive review of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004). Other international legal instruments, such as the Biological and Chemical Weapons Conventions and the IAEA safeguards, are essential for balancing, on the one hand, efforts to secure the world from the spread of biological, chemical and nuclear weapons and, on the other hand, efforts to ensure that related materials and technologies benefit society, through their peaceful uses. In that context, Thailand has taken legislative steps towards a comprehensive national control mechanism for dual-use items.

With regard to conventional arms, we have serious concerns about civilian casualties caused by small arms during conflict. We therefore welcome the international community's efforts to enhance transparency in arms transfers, as reflected in the outcome of the sixth Biennial Meeting of States to consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, as well as in the role played by the Arms Trade Treaty, which represent the international legal framework for in preventing illicit weapons from falling into the hands of unauthorized end users. While Thailand is working on the Treaty's ratification, our implementing agencies attach importance to sharing experiences at the regional level. That is why Thailand, along with the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific, hosted the South-East Asia regional workshop on the Arms Trade Treaty's implementation in April this year.

A peaceful and secure world cannot be achieved through non-proliferation measures alone. States need to make further progress, with the ultimate goal of total and complete disarmament, while taking into account the human and collective security of all. Despite the fact that nuclear weapons remain the only weapons of mass destruction that are not prohibited, Thailand is hopeful that the First Committee will act this year on the recommendations of the 2016 Open-ended Working Group taking forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations to support a United

Nations conference to be convened in 2017 to negotiate a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons. The conference would be open to all States Members of the United Nations, with contributions from the international Organization and civil society. The substantive discussion on the humanitarian consequences, with important contributions from civil society, has reshaped policies and practices that are no longer premised on the acceptance of nuclear weapons. Such efforts continue to provide new perspectives on how we should take forward nuclear-disarmament negotiations and identify possible approaches to fill the disarmament gap.

As a depositary State of the Treaty on the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free zone, Thailand joins in commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the establishment of the first nuclear-weapon-free zone, the Treaty of Tlatelolco in Latin America. In that context, we encourage the signing and ratification of the Protocol to the Treaty on the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone by the nuclear-weapon States, as well as the establishment and maintenance of such zones in other regions around the world, especially the Middle East.

In the same humanitarian spirit, Thailand is progressing towards becoming a mine-free country, according to the provisions of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention. Our national implementation focuses on assistance to victims of any unexploded remnants of war, with the goal of quick rehabilitation and reintegration into society. We also look forward to participating in the fifteenth Meeting of the States Parties to the Convention, which will be hosted by Chile in November, and encourage all States parties to make their financial contributions to the Conference so that the Convention's implementation can proceed without disruption. We also remain engaged in other disarmament frameworks, including those dealing with international instruments on other indiscriminate conventional weapons.

We take note of incremental progress within the disarmament machinery. It is clear that States must strive for consensus based on the inclusive participation of all States. We should also stand united in addressing emerging threats from new weapons and their systems, as well as in ensuring the use of outer space exclusively for peaceful purposes. At this juncture, Thailand urges a review of the current disarmament machinery and supports the work of the Open-ended Working Group

on convening the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. Thailand stands ready and committed to cooperate with all members to contribute to peace and security for all.

Mr. Garcia Moritán (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate the Chair on his election to preside over the work of the First Committee at the current session. I also congratulate the other members of the Bureau. I would like to acknowledge Mr. Kim Won-soo, Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, who was present yesterday to deliver his briefing (see A/C.1/71/PV.2), and thank him and his team for their work and dedication.

On behalf of my country, I would like to express — and perhaps the most appropriate term is reiterate — our deep concern about the fact that, 16 years into the twenty-first century, we still have not managed to rid ourselves of weapons of mass destruction — weapons that pose an existential threat to humankind. In that regard, this year provides a clear illustration of the fact that the international community's efforts to address the threats that such weapons pose have not yielded the expected results. This year has been marked by two nuclear tests conducted by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, which have been condemned in the strongest terms by my country. It has also been marked by confirmation of the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian conflict. In addition, the risk of the potential use of biological weapons by non-State actors is more manifest now than it has been in the past. It is for that reason that we are calling for the disarmament and non-proliferation regime governing such weapons to be strengthened, in particular on the occasion of the upcoming Biological Weapons Convention Review Conference.

Argentina is engaged in active collaboration with members of the international community with a view to achieving a world free of all weapons of mass destruction, as well as their methods of delivery, and reaffirms the sovereign right to develop sensitive state-of-the-art technologies, such as nuclear, chemical, biological and pharmaceutical technologies and nanotechnology, among others, with joint State and private-sector efforts being used to achieve industrial development.

Argentina remains particularly interested in the ongoing global review of the implementation of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004), as it will lay the

foundation on which we can continue our joint efforts to address the risk posed by non-State actors who seek to obtain access to weapons of mass destruction, their delivery systems and related technologies. As we have mentioned, that risk is perhaps even greater today than it was when the resolution was adopted.

The question of nuclear disarmament has always been a priority for Argentina, and we have therefore taken part in all discussion forums and negotiations on the matter, in the belief that the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear weapons is the cornerstone of the legal international nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament regime. This year, my country began to participate in the International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification, because we are convinced that in order to move towards a world free of nuclear weapons, it is crucial to carry out in-depth work on the technical implications of that goal, so that it can be achieved and be sustainable.

With regard to the report adopted by the Open-ended Working Group taking forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations, established by resolution 70/33 (see A/71/731), Argentina believes that it is essential to achieve broad consensus in favour of implementing the report's recommendations. In that regard, we reiterate Argentina's commitment to promoting the universality of disarmament instruments and the need to strengthen existing mechanisms for negotiation, including the Conference on Disarmament, in order to ensure the achievement of a world free of nuclear weapons.

Argentina notes that the results of the Open-ended Working Group, rather than enabling common ground to be found, reflect not only deepened differences between the nuclear-weapon and non-nuclear-weapon States, but also sharp differences among the non-nuclear-weapon States, which Argentina believes is not conducive to the work of the First Committee.

It is estimated that more than 650 million small arms and light weapons are illegally traded throughout the world. Some 1,500 people die each day as a result of armed violence, and 60 per cent of all human rights violations are committed with small arms. The consequences are of course devastating for our societies and pose a direct threat to the sustainable development of our peoples. In order to address that scourge, Argentina wishes to underscore the need to address issues relating to the unregulated trade in conventional weapons and the need to explore the synergies between international instruments related to arms control, the

Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, and its Firearms Protocol. In that regard, my country would like to highlight the progress made last June within the framework of the sixth Biennial Meeting of States to consider the Programme of Action, which sought to lay the foundations for agreements on ammunition, on marking and on the physical security and management of stockpiles, and we would like those concepts to be addressed during the upcoming 2018 Review Conference.

Argentina welcomes the recent holding in Geneva of the second Conference of States Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty. Its entry into force in record time is a clear illustration of the urgent need felt by the vast majority of countries to have an instrument that exerts greater control over the arms trade and protects their citizens from the consequences of the diversion of weapons.

In conclusion, I wish once again to emphasize Argentina's commitment to the work of the Committee. We hope that this session will be a fruitful one under your leadership, Sir. Rest assured of my delegation's full cooperation.

Ms. Walder (Sweden): I would like to congratulate all of the members of the Bureau on their election to important functions in the First Committee and assure them of the full cooperation of the Swedish delegation.

Sweden fully subscribes to the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union (see A/C.1/71/PV.2). I would like to add the following points in my national capacity.

As Foreign Minister Wallström said in her remarks to the General Assembly (see A/71/PV.17), now more than ever before, the international community shares a common destiny. We can master the challenges of geopolitical rivalries, the destructive forces of war and the tragic plight of refugees only if we face them together. Today we are witnessing blatant transgressions of disarmament agreements and humanitarian law in Iraq, Syria, Yemen and elsewhere. Chemical weapons, barrel bombs, cluster munitions and other indiscriminate weapons are being used to target unarmed civilians and organizations that provide humanitarian assistance in zones of armed conflict. While we meet here in New York, the civilian population in the city of Aleppo is being severely bombarded. There must be accountability for such atrocities.

Let me now address nuclear weapons. We have reiterated many times our basic and firm position that

the possession and deployment of nuclear weapons can never be the basis for sustainable security for humankind. The catastrophic consequences of any use of nuclear weapons have been well documented and are irrefutable. Current developments give cause for concern. The following are examples of some of them: the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has tested nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles in complete contravention of its obligations under Security Council resolutions; States with nuclear weapons are investing, or planning to invest, in new systems as they attempt to ensure that they maintain nuclear capacity for the foreseeable future; in South Asia, the numbers of nuclear weapons are increasing; 20 years after being opened for signature, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty has not yet entered into force; and yet again the Conference on Disarmament has failed to agree on a programme of work. It is indeed a bleak picture.

Sweden will support all processes that could make a difference and be effective, including through concrete changes on the ground and through the implementation of norms. In that vein, I will introduce a draft resolution on risk reduction on behalf of the De-Alerting Group. For norms to be effective, they need to have sufficient support, provide added value and be implemented by States.

Deliberations in the Open-ended Working Group taking forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations demonstrated a strong commitment to making progress on nuclear disarmament, despite the ultimate lack of agreement. The Working Group's report (see A/71/371) contains important proposals on how to move forward to make the world more secure. In that context, we thank the sponsors for their draft resolution entitled "Taking forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations" (A/C.1/71/L.41), which we are carefully studying.

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) remains the most important legal framework in the nuclear field. Obligations under the NPT and commitments undertaken during the Review Conferences need to be implemented with increased urgency, including the unequivocal undertaking by the nuclear-weapon States. Sweden's position is clear: the only guarantee that nuclear weapons will never be used again is their total elimination.

Sweden welcomes the outcome of the second Conference of States Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty.

That outcome puts the international community in a position in which we are able to step up our efforts in the fight against the irresponsible, unregulated and illicit arms trade. That opportunity should be seized. The Programme of Action remains our most important forum for addressing the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. Such weapons — and their ammunition — continue to destabilize societies and thus hinder peace and development. Sweden will stay fully engaged in that matter as a member of the Security Council in 2017 and 2018.

Twenty-five years have passed since the inception of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms. The Register is as relevant now as it was then. A Group of Governmental Experts, led by Ambassador Paul Beijer of Sweden, has conducted a review of the Register and will present its report and recommendations later this month. Sweden encourages all States Members of the United Nations to report their national armaments.

Sweden remains firmly committed to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) and its protocols. Sweden very much welcomes the discussions held on lethal autonomous weapon systems. As States, we have an obligation to assess the legality of new weapons. Sweden will support the decision taken at the CCW Review Conference in December to create a Group of Governmental Experts to examine that issue further.

Sweden is appalled at the continued use of chemical weapons in Iraq and Syria. My Foreign Minister, Margot Wallström, welcomed the report of the Joint Investigative Mechanism that recently determined, in no uncertain terms, that Syrian forces were responsible for at least two attacks with chemical weapons and that Da'esh is accountable for at least one such attack. Our Minister called for the perpetrators to be brought to justice. Sweden, which has contributed both financially and technically to the work of the Joint Investigative Mechanism, will continue to follow that issue closely as a member of the Executive Council of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons.

We need to move further and faster on all aspects of international security, disarmament and non-proliferation. It is my sincere wish that deliberations held in the First Committee will make a genuine difference. We believe in multilateralism and international cooperation. We are ready to do our part and work together with all other delegations.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.