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First Committee

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Official Records

Chair: Mr. Boukadoum (Algeria)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda items 89 to 105 (continued)

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

The Chair: We still have 43 speakers remaining on the list for the cluster on conventional weapons. However, before continuing with the list of speakers on that cluster, in accordance with its adopted timetable, the First Committee will first hear a briefing by Mr. Karsten Geier, the Chair of the Group of Governmental Experts on Developments in the Field of Information and Telecommunications in the Context of International Security. The report of the Secretary-General on developments in the field of information and telecommunications in the context of international security is contained in document A/71/172.

I take this opportunity to warmly welcome Mr. Karsten Geier to this meeting. Following his statement, the Committee will change to an informal mode to afford delegations the opportunity to ask questions and make comments. Thereafter, the Committee will continue listening to statements on the cluster on conventional weapons.

I now welcome and give the floor to Mr. Karsten Geier.

Mr. Geier (Germany): I thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, for inviting me to brief the Committee about the work of the Group of Governmental Experts

on Developments in the Field of Information and Telecommunications in the Context of International Security. In my briefing I would like to emphasize that I can only offer personal remarks and personal impressions of the contributions and exchanges so far. My remarks certainly do not prejudge the eventual outcome of the Group's deliberations. While the discussions of the Group of Governmental Experts are confidential, the United Nations High Representative for Disarmament has encouraged outreach to States not represented in the Group in order to be able to reflect the interests and concerns of the wider United Nations membership.

In that spirit, I especially appreciate the opportunity for today's exchange. The Group of Governmental Experts met for its first round of discussions from 29 August through 2 September here in New York. Twenty-five countries had been invited to nominate experts, and I will be happy to give the members present the list of countries that have experts in the Group, but I will not read them out here. This is the fifth such Group of Governmental Experts. The four previous ones were in 2004/2005, 2009/2010, 2012/2013 and 2014/2015. The mandate of the current Group, as formulated by the General Assembly in paragraph 5 of resolution 70/237 is

“to study, with a view to promoting common understandings, existing and potential threats in the sphere of information security and possible cooperative measures to address them and how international law applies to the use of information communication technologies by States, as well

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as norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviour of States, confidence-building measures and capacity-building..., and to submit a report on the results for the study to the General Assembly at its seventy-second session”.

In their first round of discussions, the new members of the Group overwhelmingly showed a desire to deepen the advances made in the past. The analyses provided by the previous Groups remain valid. The current experts wish to make their report more action-oriented and contribute to universalizing the recommendations of the Group of Governmental Experts. There was widespread agreement that the focus of the Group should lie on State behaviours that present a threat to international peace and security. There are, of course, a lot of other issues at hand concerning the use of information and communication technology (ICT) or Internet policy. However, there are already other forums that are able to deal with those issues in a more dedicated way and with more expertise. Our focus is therefore on State behaviour in the context of international peace and security.

Turning to the individual elements of the Group of Governmental Experts’ mandate, I would like to begin by looking at international law. In their initial exchanges, the experts confirmed the distinction between international law and non-binding norms, rules and principles for responsible State behaviour, which was made in the 2015 report (see A/70/174). Experts noted that the recommendations in that report were the result of careful discussion and reflected existing international law. Numerous other issues were discussed, including sovereignty and jurisdiction, as well as the right of States to respond to internationally wrongful acts committed using ICT. With regard to the non-binding norms, rules and principles for the responsible behaviour of States in their use of ICTs, experts agreed on their politically stabilizing potential. They suggested elaborating on the norms presented by the Group in 2015 and, in particular, clarifying where those norms actually address an obligation put on States. There was some discussion on how to promote norm-adherence as well as some ideas for additional norms.

Turning to confidence-building measures (CBMs), the experts suggested that States should first implement confidence-building measures that are easy to realize, such as transparency-building measures, including in cyberincident response schemes, but also in structures and doctrines concerning the State use of

ICT. The experts felt that CBMs were best pursued at a regional level, but they saw utility in cross-regional cooperation on confidence-building. They noted the need for political sensitization, training and capacity-building. A mechanism that links engagement and confidence-building to assistance in mitigating the effects of ICT incidents might also be helpful.

The Group of Governmental Experts had an in-depth and rich debate on cybersecurity capacity-building. Experts commented on the relationship between capacity-building and international peace and security; they remarked that capacity-building should reflect national ownership. The debate was not a one-time event but instead a process, and it should aim at being mutually beneficial. Noting that capacity-building could take place in a wide variety of formats and forums, experts suggested involving a wide variety of stakeholders for such activities, including local information and technology industries. There were remarks about the costs associated with ICT security, noting that an appropriate level of ICT security was in the interests of the wider international community. Given that many actors were offering ICT security training, experts saw a need to avoid unnecessary duplication. In terms of coordination, they felt that there might be an important role for the United Nations.

Looking at future work, experts discussed criteria that might help formulate ideas. They felt a need for inclusiveness, transparency and balance, but also for ensuring the continued opportunity for expert discussion, as well as a need for ensuring the legitimacy of work on the State use of ICT in the context of international peace and security. The need for monitoring the implementation of already agreed norms and CBMs was also discussed.

That is all I wish to say concerning the substance of the Group’s discussions. The next round of discussions of the Group Of Governmental Experts will be held from 28 November to 2 December in Geneva, and there will be further meetings in Geneva in March and in New York in June 2017. On the basis of the first week’s discussions, as well as the written input received from a number of experts, I am confident that we all desire to build further on the consensus achieved by previous Groups of Governmental Experts, and to make a contribution to the work of the United Nations on the use of information and communication technologies in the context of international peace and security.

I thank the members of the Committee for their attention and I will try my best to answer any questions that may arise.

The Chair: I warmly thank Mr. Karsten Geier for his briefing.

I shall now suspend the meeting so as to afford delegations the opportunity to have an interactive discussion on the briefing we have just heard through an informal question and answer session.

The meeting was suspended at 10.15 a.m. and resumed at 10.25 a.m.

The Chair: The Committee will now resume its consideration of the cluster on conventional weapons. I urge all speakers, once again, to kindly observe the time limit of five minutes when speaking in their national capacity and seven minutes when speaking on behalf of a group. The Committee will continue to use the buzzer to remind delegations when the time limit has been reached.

Mr. Bin Momen (Bangladesh): Bangladesh aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (see A/C.1/71/PV.15).

Bangladesh remains concerned over the far-reaching security implications and the grave humanitarian consequences of conventional weapons and their proliferation, as well as their illicit transfer or diversion. In view of the staggering size of the international trade in conventional weapons and its correlation with the exacerbation of armed conflicts around the world, we believe that the issue deserves to be factored into the comprehensive notion of “sustaining peace”, which is contained in resolution 70/262, adopted by Member States this year to address the entire spectrum from conflict prevention to peacebuilding. We also find it logical to address the threats posed by the illicit flow of arms and ammunition, as presented in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. We recommend that the Committee remain mindful of the potential contribution of its work towards realizing target 16.4 of the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular.

Bangladesh is a State party to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) and its Protocols. We were the first South Asian country to become party to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. We

remain the only signatory State from the region to the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT). We attach importance to further strengthening our national capacity for implementing the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. We have a record of reporting to the Group of Governmental Experts on the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms and continue to pursue further developments in line with the Group’s reporting template.

The CCW and its Protocols provide a platform for convening gatherings of the major producers and users of certain conventional weapons and help strike a balance between the humanitarian and security imperatives, which many seek to achieve. The fifth Review Conference of the CCW, held in December 2015, provided us with the opportunity to advance the ongoing dialogue on the international legal and regulatory framework dealing with certain advanced conventional weapons, pursuant to the Convention’s objectives and purposes.

Bangladesh looks forward to constructive discussions on the recommendations made concerning lethal autonomous-weapons systems by the informal meeting of experts held in April. We recognize the potential for addressing the challenges posed by improvised explosive devices (IEDs), including their use by terrorists and other non-State groups, under the purview of the CCW. This year, Bangladesh decided to co-sponsor the draft resolution on IEDs steered by Afghanistan. We await the conclusion of the ongoing work on the CCW’s Protocol VI on Cluster Munitions, which we believe would help further develop our policy consideration of the Convention on Cluster Munitions.

Bangladesh looks forward to the fifteenth Meeting of State Parties to the Ottawa Convention later this year to review progress with regard to the implementation of the Cartagena Action Plan. Bangladesh’s peacekeepers, deployed in various post-conflict settings, have contributed to mine clearance, as, at the same time, we continue to advance our work on national implementation legislation with the support of the International Committee of the Red Cross.

Bangladesh welcomes the consensus-based outcome of the sixth Biennial Meeting of States on the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, and appreciates the

Meeting's consideration of the policy and legal and regulatory implications of emerging issues concerning modular weapons, the three-dimensional printing of small arms and the use of polymer frames and additive manufacturing techniques. We underscore the importance of strengthening international cooperation to help developing and least-developed countries improve their regulatory and tracing capacity in tandem with such new developments and challenges.

We acknowledge the various offers of technical assistance from the United Nations and other development partners to further strengthen our legal, institutional and technological capacity to facilitate our eventual accession to and compliance with the ATT. While we continue to follow the work of the Conference of the States Parties to the ATT as an observer, we reiterate that signatory States should be exempted from any additional obligations beyond the commitments that they have already undertaken in principle.

Ms. Urruela Arenales (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): From the outset, we wish to align ourselves with the statement delivered by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (see A/C.1/71/PV.15). We also wish to make several remarks with regard to the topic of the current cluster in our national capacity.

The fight against arms trafficking is a main priority of our Government. In our region, illicit arms trafficking is fuelled by the growing presence of narco-trafficking and transnational organized crime, which serve also to undermine development and security for the population. The problem transcends borders, countries and regions. Such weapons cause the deaths of hundreds of thousands of people worldwide each year, generate conflict and compound gender-related violence and insecurity. That is why Guatemala resolutely supports the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT). The relative speed with which the Treaty was negotiated, entered into force and acquired so many signatories and States parties not only demonstrates its importance, but the high degree of commitment on the part of the international community.

The Treaty is undoubtedly one of the major successes of multilateralism in recent years. However, it is a young treaty, and therefore the Conferences of States Parties are important, especially in the first few years, and decisive in ensuring its effectiveness. The second Conference of States Parties, recently held in

Geneva, adopted important decisions that will directly impact the Treaty's implementation.

Guatemala ratified the Treaty soon after it was opened for signature, recognizing its noble and essential provisions. On 12 July we deposited our instrument of ratification. We actively participated in its negotiation and in the preparatory process for the first Conference of States Parties. At present we are Vice-President of the third Conference of States Parties, which is to be convened in 2017. We must continue to work for its full implementation so that it can continue to fight the illicit trade in arms and ensure that transit countries, exporters and producers comply with the same standards.

Furthermore, my delegation reiterates its commitment to the full implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and its follow-up mechanisms. We must allow for the development of that important instrument so as to ensure its relevance.

On that last point, while the outcome document adopted at the sixth Biennial Meeting of States on Small Arms did not reflect much progress in terms of including ammunition, it did reflect the insistence of a large number of States on promoting that topic under the framework of the Programme of Action. Moreover, the recent report of the Secretary-General on small arms and light weapons (A/71/438) recognizes that stopping the flows of arms and ammunition can have an immediate effect on the intensity of armed violence and that the utility of small arms and light weapons depends on the uninterrupted provision of ammunition. We are committed to continuing to fight for the inclusion of ammunition in the Programme of Action, and we will take that item to the Review Conference in 2018.

Guatemala strongly condemns the use of cluster munitions by any actor and in any circumstance. It is a violation of the principles embodied in international humanitarian law. Guatemala reaffirms its commitment to contribute to the effective implementation of the Convention on Cluster Munitions. In that respect, we welcome the adoption of the Dubrovnik Action Plan on such munitions.

Lastly, we wish to reiterate our concern over the use of explosive devices in populated areas. The humanitarian consequences are devastating, and the effects are indiscriminate. We recognize the importance

of respecting international humanitarian law and the responsibility of States to protect their civilians.

Ms. O'Brien (Ireland): I wish to align myself with the statement made by the observer of the European Union (A/C.1/71/PV.16) and to add the following remarks in our national capacity. In the interest of time, I will read out an edited version of our statement, and the full one will be available online.

Ireland welcomes the many positive achievements of the international community with regard to conventional arms matters this year. We would like to congratulate Ambassador Courtney Rattray of Jamaica on the outcome of the sixth Biennial Meeting of States to Consider Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, and Ambassador Paul Beijer of Sweden for his leadership of the Group of Governmental Experts on the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms. We are supportive of the outcomes related to those important United Nations instruments and look forward to their full implementation.

Ireland was pleased to join France and a group of 55 States in connection with the declaration issued yesterday on the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. We particularly welcome the recognition both in the outcome document of the sixth Biennial Meeting of States and in the declaration that the promotion of the meaningful participation and representation of women in policymaking, planning and implementation processes is crucial to overcoming obstacles and achieving success in the challenges that face us.

However current challenges regarding the use of conventional weapons are many and are increasing. As we debate in this Hall, terrible losses of life, humanitarian harm to civilians and destruction of civilian infrastructure are taking place as a result of the use of conventional weapons in current conflicts. Ireland considers the use of explosive weapons with wide-area effects in populated areas one of the most serious challenges facing us in terms of conventional weapons issues at this time. Our Minister for Foreign Affairs, Charles Flanagan, raised that issue in his recent speech at the United Nations (see A/71/PV.20), and we acknowledge and welcome the attention being focused on the issue by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs,

as well as the civil-society group International Network on Explosive Weapons.

It is now a matter of urgency to explore ways to raise consciousness and strengthen the application of international humanitarian law in efforts to prevent civilian harm caused by the use of explosive weapons in populated areas. Ireland would also welcome consideration of that question during the upcoming Review Conference of the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects (CCW). The Review Conference offers an important opportunity to renew and invigorate that crucial instrument of international humanitarian law. Again, we would urge all States to accede to the Convention and to its protocols.

We are encouraged by the active consideration that has been given to the question of lethal-autonomous-weapons systems within the framework of the CCW and welcome the consensus recommendations adopted at the meeting of experts in April. Ireland believes that it would now be timely for the Review Conference to establish a group of governmental experts to take that important work forward.

Ireland also views the question of mines other than anti-personnel mines as one of continuing humanitarian urgency. My delegation believes that the limited provisions on mines other than anti-personnel mines in Amended Protocol II of the CCW have not proved adequate to the task of addressing the humanitarian harm arising from the use of such weapons. We therefore believe that States parties should engage with that issue at the expert level so as to determine how the CCW can best take that work forward in an inclusive and cooperative manner, without prejudging the outcome in any way, in order to address the humanitarian harm arising from the use of mines other than anti-personnel mines.

The Ottawa Convention and the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM) continue to provide strong evidence of the power of normative action. We welcome the declaration adopted at the recent Meeting of the States Parties to the CCM and look forward to the meeting in Santiago on the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. We would like to thank Chile for hosting that meeting,

which we hope will mark another important step on the way to meeting the ambitious aim of the Maputo Declaration of reaching a mine-free world by 2025.

With regard to the Arms Trade Treaty and its aim of regulating illicit and irresponsible arms transfers, we are satisfied with the outcome of the Second Conference of States Parties and continue to encourage those countries that have not yet acceded to the Treaty to do so. We are particularly pleased with the adoption of a common reporting template, which we see, along with public reporting, as crucial to the successful implementation of the Treaty. We look forward to less procedural and more substantive discussions next year.

Last year, the international community signed on to an ambitious and creative sustainable development agenda (resolution 70/1). The sustainable development targets set by our leaders included a significant reduction in violent and violence-related deaths everywhere. Another relevant target for our Committee's work was the aim of achieving a significant reduction in illicit arms flows by 2030.

In order to achieve those aims, we must all work to strengthen and make existing conventional-arms treaties and instruments universal so that they are genuinely and fully fit for purpose.

Mr. Bálek (Czech Republic): The Czech Republic fully aligns itself with the statement made by the observer of the European Union (A/C.1/71/PV.16), and I will limit myself to only a few points that I want to add in my national capacity.

The Czech Republic welcomes the outcomes and the success of the second Conference of States Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), held in August in Geneva. The ATT is a crucial element in the development of internationally agreed standards to oversee the still poorly regulated global trade in conventional arms. As the necessary structures are now in place, we have to maintain the momentum and focus on further universalization and full implementation of the ATT. The Czech Republic is proud to have an opportunity to participate actively in the work of the Treaty's Management Committee, and we will continue to contribute through active outreach and assistance across the globe.

The Czech Republic reiterates its strong support for the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May

Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects (CCW), which regulates the conduct of armed conflict and therefore constitutes an essential part of international humanitarian law. The universalization of the CCW and its Protocols remains one of the highest priorities of the Czech Republic. We look forward to the fifth Review Conference, which will be taking place in December this year. We believe that progress in discussions and even decisions will be made there, especially on lethal autonomous weapons systems and possibly on mines other than anti-personnel mines.

The Czech Republic welcomes the substantial progress achieved since the latest Review Conference of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. The fifteenth Meeting of the States Parties in Santiago this November will provide us with a great opportunity to evaluate progress and challenges, especially in decontamination and victim assistance, and to discuss the priorities to achieve the goals of the Convention.

The first Review Conference of the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM), held in Dubrovnik last year, proved and highlighted once again the noble goals of the Convention: the prohibition of the use, production, stockpiling and transfer of cluster munitions, the clearance of contaminated land, the destruction of stockpiles, and victim assistance. We confirm our commitment and readiness to help with the swift implementation of the Convention. In that context, we very much welcome the recently formulated goal of the States parties to implement their obligations stemming from the Convention before 2030.

Each year, small arms and light weapons and their ammunition cause the death of and injure hundreds of thousands of people, including women and children. Their illicit trade and excessive accumulation adversely affect regional and international security and stability. Small and light weapons can contribute to terrorism and organized crime, and are a major factor in triggering and spreading conflicts and the collapse of State structures. The Czech Republic remains committed to working with all States Members of the United Nations in addressing those challenges within the framework of the 2001 United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. At the same time, the Czech Republic continues to support

measures to ensure adequate marking and record-keeping for small arms and light weapons in order to strengthen cooperation in tracing illicit small arms and light weapons.

Mr. Drobnyak (Croatia): Allow me to start by congratulating you, Mr. Chair, on your assumption of this important chairmanship. Both you and all the Bureau members can be assured of my delegation's strong support.

Croatia fully aligns itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union (see A/C.1/71/PV.16), and wishes to add the following in its national capacity.

Issues of disarmament and arms control remain high on Croatia's agenda. The complex realities of international security compel all States to advance their efforts even further so as to work multilaterally and reaffirm the tangible results already achieved towards our common goals.

The dangers of the indiscriminate use of certain conventional weapons and their widespread harmful effects on civilian populations and on combatants are at the core of the humanitarian objectives of the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects (CCW). We remain fully committed to the Convention and its five Protocols. The CCW is a valuable multilateral instrument that offers a credible platform to discuss both ongoing issues and emerging ones. That is especially important against the background of new technologies that are changing the field of conventional disarmament. By regularly strengthening the Convention and its Protocols and by ensuring that our joint work is meaningful and our outreach activities are productive, we have the unique opportunity to maintain the CCW as a relevant and robust instrument of international humanitarian law and arms control.

We are deeply concerned at the use of explosive weapons in civilian-populated areas, as they cause extensive harm and devastation and have far-reaching effects. The armed conflicts in Syria and Yemen, where those weapons continue to be used daily, only underscore the urgent need for the international community to make every effort to enhance the protection of civilians in conflict and improve compliance with international humanitarian law. In that regard, Croatia acknowledges

and fully shares the concerns voiced by the Secretary-General, relevant United Nations agencies, civil-society organizations and a number of States.

The Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction establishes a strict set of rules for banning such inhumane weapons, and has been seen as a crucial contributor to the strengthening of international humanitarian law. Croatia has been a steadfast supporter of that life-saving international instrument from its very inception, and we remain committed to supporting efforts aimed at achieving the goals of the Convention. As a country that still has mine-contaminated areas in its territory, Croatia is all too aware of the threat that those weapons pose to the everyday livelihoods of people.

That is why we remain deeply concerned by the information that anti-personnel landmines still continue to be used, both by States outside the Convention and non-State actors around the world. We strongly condemn those actions, which cause irreparable humanitarian harm. For us, the use of anti-personnel mines is therefore never acceptable, not by anyone and not under any circumstances. If their use has indeed occurred, those responsible must be held accountable according to the applicable legislation in force.

Informal discussions on lethal autonomous weapons systems have been taking place within the CCW for the past three years. Based on that discussion, we now have a better understanding of such weapons systems; yet many unanswered questions remain, including those that raise fundamental ethical, legal, operational, technical and political concerns. For Croatia, a key question is whether those new technologies would be compliant with the rules of international humanitarian law, including those of distinction, proportionality and military necessity. We should also study their potential impact on human rights and their compliance with international human rights law. The principle of meaningful human control is of pivotal importance, because we believe that the ultimate responsibility should be in human hands.

Bearing in mind the nature of modern conflicts, we are determined in our commitment to strengthening the Convention on Cluster Munitions and to promoting its universalization. That is essential, because we have at hand indiscriminate and unreliable weapons that cause human casualties long after conflicts end. With pride

and hope, we point out that the first Review Conference of the Convention on Cluster Munitions was held last year in Dubrovnik, Croatia, where important documents were adopted. The Dubrovnik Political Declaration once again underlined the commitment of all States that have joined the Convention to eradicate such inhumane weapons, and the Dubrovnik Action Plan has set concrete actions and measures to achieve that noble goal.

We warmly welcome the Political Declaration adopted during the sixth Meeting of States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions, under the able leadership of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, which condemns any use of cluster munitions by any actor and introduces an end date for the fulfilment of obligations under the Convention. We remain concerned about any instances of the use of cluster munitions, particularly having in mind the influx of new reports about continued and increased use of cluster munitions in Syria in recent months, as well as earlier reports of the use of these weapons in Libya, the Sudan, Ukraine and Yemen. We reiterate our call to all States concerned to fully refrain from the use of cluster munitions and to clarify the reported allegations of use of these weapons in an open and transparent manner.

Once again, we call upon all States that have not yet joined the Convention to add their voice to the vast number of States that have already recognized the dangers of these weapons to express their solidarity with the victims and to help to eradicate this inhumane weapon.

Ms. Dallafior (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): Conventional weapons are the main instruments of violence used in armed conflicts today. They claim innumerable victims, damage infrastructure and contribute directly to the displacement of millions of people. That makes them an obstacle to development and a major challenge to the implementation of and respect for international humanitarian law. Control of the transfer of arms in areas plagued by violence and conflict is one way to remedy this situation. The Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) plays an essential role in this regard.

Switzerland welcomes the decisions taken at the second Conference of States Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty. A number of administrative and procedural decisions were adopted that consolidated the functioning of the Treaty. States parties can now focus more on its substance. The universalization of

the ATT is a major objective contributing to the goal and purpose of the Treaty. My delegation welcomes the creation of a working group dedicated to this issue. We call on all Member States to ratify and or comply with the ATT.

The effective implementation of Treaty provisions is also necessary. That will require the development of a common approach in the application its key provisions. The Working Group on the Effective Implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty will play an important role in that regard. Finally, the Arms Trade Treaty Voluntary Trust Fund constitutes an important instrument for international assistance to support the implementation of the Treaty, a instrument that Switzerland intends to support.

Working on the resolution of humanitarian problems also entails taking measures concerning the way in which conventional weapons are used in conflicts. In that connection, the protection of civilians within the framework of armed conflict and respect for international humanitarian law are of crucial importance. We are particularly concerned by the indiscriminate and disproportionate use of conventional weapons and explosive munitions by both State and non-State actors, especially in areas with concentrations of civilians. The obligations of international humanitarian law must be respected at all times and in all circumstances.

As for Switzerland, the manufacture, transfer and illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons, as well their stockpiling and misuse, represent a distinct humanitarian and security threat. Switzerland fully supports the statement on the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons to be delivered by the representative of France.

Switzerland also wishes to emphasize the necessity of further addressing the issue of the safe and secure management of munitions. Inadequately managed munitions stocks regularly fall into the wrong hands, fuelling armed conflicts and violence. In addition, over the past 10 years, accidental explosions of munitions depots have happened, on average, every two weeks, killing and injuring workers or people living nearby. Suitable management of munitions constitutes a key response to those humanitarian and security challenges. In that context, Switzerland will organize in Geneva on 8 and 9 December an international workshop on safe and secure management of munitions. Open to all Member States, it follows up the international

consultative meeting held in November 2015. We issue an invitation to everyone present here today.

Technological advances are likely to lead to new means and methods of warfare. States must ensure that these new systems are in compliance with international law and must regulate them if deemed necessary. If the rapid developments in the fields of artificial intelligence and robotics are positive, their growing integration into weapon systems requires very particular attention and monitoring by the international community. Discussions on lethal autonomous weapon systems have revealed a broad consensus among the High Contracting Parties to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) that international law applies to all weapons systems, including lethal autonomous weapon systems, and must be respected in all circumstances. The CCW must now specify the applicable international law, notably on the specific provisions of international humanitarian law and those relating to the examination of new weapon systems or on the question of responsibility.

Switzerland welcomes the recommendations formulated in April 2016 by the Meeting of Experts on Lethal Autonomous Weapon Systems and hopes that the fifth Conference Review of the CCW will establish a group of governmental experts with a strong mandate to future work.

Ms. Robles (France) (*spoke in French*): I am delivering an abridged version of my statement; the complete text can be found online.

France aligns itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union (see A/C.1/71/PV.16). I would like to make the following additional remarks.

Conventional arms continue to represent a major security challenge for all regions of the world. As in many other areas, there is no single response, but a series of specific, adapted and coherent measures whose primary objective must be to strengthen international security, taking into account everyone's security concerns and benefiting all. The past year has proven that international action in the area of conventional weapons must now increasingly take into consideration the risk of their acquisition and use by terrorist groups. France, like other countries, unfortunately has tragically experienced that.

The illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons continues to fuel conflicts and exacerbate

armed violence as well as fuelling terrorism and organized crime. It is a grave threat to international peace and security. Small arms and light weapons are today those that kill by far the most people worldwide. The United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons remains an essential instrument. It continues to be the cornerstone of our efforts. The United Nations Conference to Review Progress Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action, to be held in 2018, will provide an opportunity to take stock of actions conducted to date, but also to look towards the future and to work on strengthening the effectiveness and coherence of our actions. France, as the President-designate of the third Conference to Review the Programme of Action, will spare no efforts and will work with all delegations to ensure the success of that Conference.

Only together can we overcome this challenge. That is why France has taken the initiative to propose, in the context of the fifteenth anniversary of the Programme of Action, a political declaration on the topic of the illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons. The declaration aims at increasing the visibility of the issue, but also, and above all, at identifying common areas of effort. Some of them go beyond the Programme of Action, but they must be felt to complement it in order to strengthen the coherence of our actions.

The Review Conference of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) will be held in November. The fact that States parties to the CCW have taken up the issue of autonomous lethal weapons systems, proposed by France in 2013, is an important development in the context of the Convention. France encourages dialogue on the challenges concerning those future systems and hopes that the upcoming Review Conference can agree to set up a group of governmental experts charged with a mandate to explore that theme.

The threat of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) is a global concern that affects all regions. The international community must mobilize around that issue. The renewed engagement was sparked by last year's consensus adoption of the first resolution in the First Committee aimed at improvised explosive devices. The resolution should be a guideline for action by the international community. It is important that the work to be carried out on improvised explosive devices, at both practical and political levels, be generally consistent with the efforts of the international

community, in keeping with the spirit of the resolution. France is fully committed to tackling that issue in the CCW, by coordinating the group of experts on improvised explosive devices, and is ready to continue work on IEDs during the next review cycle of the CCW.

In 2016, we sought the implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT). The second Conference of States Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty made possible the establishment of a robust framework for substantive discussion, including on the implementation of the Treaty. Naturally, France will contribute to those efforts. In those discussions, we must not lose sight of our objective: to make the ATT a fully universal standard. We must also not lose sight of the distinct circumstances of each State party or of the need to work towards a convergence of national practices to achieve the common objective established by the Treaty.

Finally, I take this opportunity to highlight the fact that in 2016 France completed the destruction of its stockpiles of cluster munitions, two years before the deadline set under the Convention on Cluster Munitions. France is fully committed to that Convention, as well as the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. France is actively engaged with these matters and will continue to be so.

Mr. Quinn (Australia): The daily reality for many people in many countries is the fear, suffering, death, destruction and economic chaos wrought by illegally traded, poorly managed and misused conventional arms and ammunition. Preventing instability and promoting security and economic development, especially in our Asia-Pacific region, are high priorities for Australia.

We encourage States to redouble their efforts towards the universalization and implementation of international instruments in the field of conventional weapons. Australia remains strongly committed to advancing the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT). We encourage States that have not yet done so to ratify or accede to the ATT. Over the next year, as one of the ATT's Vice-Presidents, we will be focusing on universalisation and implementation in the Asia-Pacific region. Since the first Conference of States Parties, Australia has supported ATT workshops in Fiji, Solomon Islands, Cambodia, Thailand, and, most recently, in Samoa, last month.

Australia is also active in promoting other efforts to combat the illicit trade in and mismanagement of small

arms and light weapons. We worked hard to contribute to a solid consensus outcome at this year's 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, and we are committed to strengthening the United Nations Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons at its third Review Conference, in 2018. The complementarity between the ATT and the Programme of Action needs to be further considered at that Conference. We are also pleased to support France's initiative to adopt a declaration on small arms and light weapons at this session of the General Assembly.

Australia is a leading donor to the United Nations Trust Facility Supporting Cooperation on Arms Regulation, which yesterday considered 60 applications from organizations seeking funding to support conventional arms regulation initiatives around the globe.

Ms. Urruela Arenales (Guatemala), Vice Chair, took the Chair.

This year marks the twentieth anniversary of Australia's comprehensive gun law reform — called the national firearms agreement — prompted by a mass shooting in Tasmania's Port Arthur in 1996. That agreement, along with strong border controls, has contributed to Australia's lower rates of gun violence when compared with many other parts of the world. Australia has firm evidence that having fewer guns in circulation reduces the occurrence of gun-related death and injury, and increases safety and security.

Australia also remains committed to mine action and to supporting the implementation of the Convention on Cluster Munitions, the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, and Protocol V, on Explosive Remnants of War, to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons. We are providing significant funding for United Nations Mine Action Service activities in Iraq and other regions. We have also committed another \$9 million over five years to our long-term mine action programme in Cambodia. We have consistently supported the Mine Ban Convention and Cluster Munition Convention Implementation Support Units, as well as key international demining efforts

There is much to be done to achieve the goals of completing clearance and stockpile destruction efforts by 2025 and 2030 under the Mine Ban Convention

and Convention on Cluster Munitions, respectively. Moreover, the needs of the victims of those munitions will remain long afterwards. Both affected States and donor States must therefore put in place measures to ensure the sustainability of victim assistance. Australia is pleased to be developing guidance for States on addressing that challenge, including through our role as Coordinator of Cooperation and Assistance for the Convention on Cluster Munitions.

The annual meetings and review conferences of the Mine Ban Convention, the Cluster Munitions Convention and the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons provide vital opportunities for ensuring that the momentum of those conventions is sustained. Those conventions do not cost huge sums to run. We therefore urge all States parties in arrears to clear their debts. Moreover, as sponsorship coordinator for the Mine Ban Convention, we also encourage States parties in a position to do so to contribute to sponsorship programmes, so as to enable all States parties to attend relevant conferences.

Finally, we encourage all Member States to co-sponsor the draft resolution on preventing and combating illicit brokering activities (A/C.1/71/L.9), put forward by Australia and the Republic of Korea, and the draft resolution on improvised explosive devices (A/C.1/71/L.68), put forward by Afghanistan, France and Australia.

Mr. Abdeslam (Algeria): Algeria fully associates itself with the statements delivered by the representative of Indonesia, on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, and by the representative of Nigeria on behalf of the Group of African States, respectively (see A/C.1/71/PV.15).

Concerning the thematic debate on conventional weapons, my delegation would like to underscore that the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons continues to be an exacerbating factor in armed violence and generates devastating humanitarian and socioeconomic consequences. Moreover, those weapons continue to threaten peace, security and stability in many countries and regions, particularly in Africa. In that context, ever since their close links with terrorists groups, organized crime, drug trafficking and smuggling networks was acknowledged as an on-the-ground reality, they have been a constant and major concern of the international community.

Algeria continues to give high priority to securing its borders from the organized arms, drug and human trafficking networks, and it spares no effort in dismantling those criminal networks. It also contributes enormously to the fight against the growing scourge of terrorism, particularly in the Sahel region. Additionally, my country has adapted its laws and regulations on those matters.

On the basis of its national experience, Algeria would like to reiterate 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 and the International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons remain of the utmost relevance, and their full implementation should be achieved in a balanced and comprehensive manner. As stated in the United Nations Programme of Action, subregional, regional and international cooperation and assistance are essential to ensuring effective border control and therefore to eradicating the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. In that connection, Algeria remains strongly in favour of all forms of assistance and cooperation initiatives undertaken at the regional level.

Within that framework, my country has engaged further with the Sahel countries in the development of security cooperation measures and technical assistance programmes, including the training of the security and customs services personnel, in order to allow those countries to develop their technical and operational capacities in the field. Similarly, Algeria concluded cooperation agreements directly or indirectly related to the illicit trafficking of all types of arms. We strongly believe that insuring adequate assistance from developed countries, the United Nations and international organizations can contribute enormously to strengthening the capacity of the Sahel countries to combat the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and therefore to dismantling organized arms-trafficking networks and terrorist groups.

In that context, building on the successful conclusion of the sixth Biennial Meeting of States on the Implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons, my delegation looks forward to further actions to eliminate the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in advance of the third Review Conference, to be held in 2018.

Algeria would like to underscore the importance of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons. Our adherence to that international instrument and our ratification in 2015 of its three Protocols once again confirm our commitment to international cooperation as indispensable to ensuring peace and collective security, based on the principles of the Charter of the United Nations. They also reflect our belief in the affirmation of humanitarian principles and goals that the Convention implies. However, the suffering that anti-personnel mines cause remains a real problem in many countries, including Algeria. In that context, my country is fully committed to meeting its 2017 mine-clearance deadline, and our engagement has already enabled us to reach a major milestone.

I would like to take this opportunity to encourage all States parties to overcome the challenges remaining in relation to the Convention, in particular by working together to assist and cooperate with one another on demining projects and victims' assistance, noting that the fifteenth meeting of its States parties, to be held this year in Santiago, will feature a special session on enhancing international cooperation in order to accelerate implementation. While our work on implementing the Convention will have to continue for several years, the fifteenth meeting is taking place at a time when the number of casualties is dropping, an indication that the Convention is effectively meeting its goals even if a lot more must be done before our job is finished.

The Acting Chair (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on the representative of Finland, who will introduce draft resolution A/C.1/71/L.29.

Mr. Sauer (Finland): I would like to align my statement with that delivered earlier by the observer of the European Union (see A/C.1/71/PV.15). My remarks will highlight a few priority issues for Finland.

Illicit and irresponsible flows of arms and conventional weapons are one of the greatest challenges we face today. Many armed conflicts know no borders. Civilians, including women and children, are increasingly targeted. In the light of that, Finland has joined the Declaration on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons prepared by France, and we share the aim to give due attention to this topic during this year's debate.

The Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) is a landmark instrument that provides effective international

standards for regulating the trade in conventional arms, making it more responsible and transparent. It also includes the concept of serious acts of gender-based violence, as well as human rights and respect for humanitarian law, as factors to be taken into account when making export assessments. Finland welcomed the successful outcome of the second Conference of State Parties to the ATT, held in Geneva in August. The Conference elected Finland as President of the ATT for one year, to culminate in September 2017 at the third Conference of States Parties.

There are two elements that I want to stress in our future work. The first is the role of national implementation, and the second is the Treaty's universalization. Implementation is a real challenge. It includes strengthening national laws and regulations as well as enforcement mechanisms. All of that should contribute to the ultimate objective, which is a more responsible trade in arms. We should also tackle the spread of arms to unintended end-users.

One of the presidency's tasks is promoting the universalization of the ATT. Considering that the Treaty is relatively new, it has already been a success. We have heard positive signals from countries that are in the process of ratification. We would also like to call on States that have not yet done so to ratify, accept, approve or accede to the Treaty, according to their respective constitutional processes.

Finland has submitted the annual draft resolution on the ATT to the First Committee at this year's session (A/C.1/71/L.29), and we are grateful for all the support we received during the consultations on the draft. We thank delegations that have already sponsored the draft resolution and encourage others to join before we take action on it next week.

Finland welcomes the success of the sixth Biennial Meeting of States on the Programme of Action on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons, held in June. Its substantial outcome document provides a good basis for further work on the Programme of Action ahead of its next Review Conference, to be held in 2018. We were particularly pleased to see gender issues and the link between the illicit arms trade and sustainable development appropriately reflected in the outcome document.

Regarding other important topics on the agenda of this thematic discussion, I would like add that Finland remains strongly committed to the Convention

on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) and its Protocols. The Convention is an important part of the international disarmament machinery. The fifth Review Conference of the CCW will provide an opportunity to continue to address both long-standing and newly emerging issues. It is important to ensure that the CCW stays abreast of developments in conventional arms. Finland strongly supports the recommendations made by the expert group on lethal autonomous weapon systems, including for the establishment of a group of governmental experts under CCW auspices. Finland also welcomes the political Declaration on Improvised Explosive Devices.

Finland continues to support the implementation and universalization of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention. We continue to engage at the global level in alleviating the humanitarian consequences of anti-personnel mines, cluster munitions and explosive remnants of war. The numerous conflicts around the world are also creating new minefields and other explosive hazards. Finland will support humanitarian mine action between now and 2020 by providing €12 million in funding for Afghanistan, Syria, Iraq, Somalia and Ukraine. Finland's humanitarian mine action employs a comprehensive approach that contributes to wider efforts to promote global security, stability and development.

Mr. Ramírez Carreño (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): We are pleased to see a representative of our region presiding over the discussion today. We wish to take this opportunity to express our gratitude to Ambassador Sabri Boukadoum and the entire Bureau of the Committee for the way they are conducting the Committee's work.

My delegation associates itself with the statements delivered earlier by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and by our own delegation on behalf of the Union of South American Nations (see A/C.1/71/PV.15).

There are no exact figures for the total of small arms and light weapons currently in circulation globally. However, some sources estimate that they number at least 875 million around the world, many in the hands of individuals or non-State actors. To that, we can add the 8 million small arms and light weapons that are produced annually. We are deeply concerned about the fact that every year hundreds of thousands of what technically are called small arms and light

weapons — heavy machine guns, grenade launchers, surface-to-air missiles, portable air defence systems, portable rocket launchers, rifles and pistols, among others — are transferred to the illicit market and to non-State actors, including terrorist groups, around the world.

The Secretary-General's 2013 report to the Security Council on small arms (S/2013/503) takes account of the impact that the collapse of the Libyan State had on the proliferation of weapons in the Middle East and North Africa. It is known that weapons, ammunition and explosives that entered the country during the intervention have fallen into the hands of non-State actors and terrorists in 12 countries in the Maghreb, the Sahel, the Levant and the Horn of Africa. It has also been documented how the military intervention and the war in Iraq increased the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in the region to a dizzying degree.

The rapid increase in the flow and illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons in North Africa and the Middle East, with its terrible burden of violence, impunity, crimes against humanity and massive violations of human rights, is one of the terrible consequences of political destabilization, interventionism and induced wars in Iraq, Libya and Syria. We condemn the fact that many of the world's major producers and exporters of arms continue to refuse to prohibit the transfer to non-State actors of conventional weapons, including small arms and light weapons, thereby leaving a large legal vacuum that enables them to continue supplying weapons to their political allies in various parts of the world.

Venezuela condemns the use of armed drones to carry out extrajudicial killings and other activities that contravene international law, particularly international humanitarian law, by any actor, at any time and under any circumstances. It was entirely predictable that drones, with no controls over them, would be misused by Governments and non-State actors, including terrorist groups such as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham. And what is going on with drones could also happen very soon with new technologies such as nanotechnology, robotics and genetic manipulation, once they reach the threshold of militarization. The damage and suffering they could cause if they go unregulated is incalculable.

We reiterate our condemnation of the use of cluster munitions, such as we have seen in the Gaza Strip and

Yemen, owing to their devastating and indiscriminatory effect on civilians. We are also deeply concerned about the increasing modernization of the conventional weapons systems that most developed countries consider strategically important, which threatens to rapidly widen the conventional weapons gap between the richest and most advanced States and everyone else.

Lastly, the excessive production of conventional weapons, including small arms and light weapons, poses a threat to the lives and welfare of millions of people, especially when such weapons fall into the hands of non-State actors, including terrorists. We should insist on an international agreement designed to limit production of such weapons to the level needed for the legitimate defence of countries.

Mr. Tsymbaliuk (Ukraine): Ukraine fully shares the international community's concerns that the illicit trade, spread and misuse of small arms and light weapons pose a serious threat to global security and stability. We therefore continue to view the United Nations Programme of Action on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons as one of the most important and universal tools in the global effort to combat this threat. We support appropriate implementation by all States of the Programme of Action and the International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons.

Taking this into account, Ukraine supports and co-sponsors the draft resolution on the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects (A/C.1/71/L.25). We also thank the delegation of France for its initiative in producing the political Declaration on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons, which we fully support.

Ukraine attaches particular importance to ensuring effective conventional arms export-control procedures that meet all current international requirements. We are also concerned about the issue of brokering activity. Ukraine strictly adheres to the decisions of the Security Council, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the Wassenaar Arrangement international export-control regime. The Security Council resolutions that impose sanctions regimes, including arms embargoes, form the guidelines for the adoption of relevant legislation and regulations in Ukraine and are strictly implemented by all national authorities. Ukraine fully supports the draft resolutions

on preventing and combating illicit brokering activities (A/C.1/71/L.9) and on transparency in armaments (A/C.1/71/L.21).

We welcomed the entry into force of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) and support its effective implementation as a comprehensive instrument for establishing common standards in this field. As in previous years, Ukraine supports and co-sponsors the draft resolution on the ATT (A/C.1/71/L.29).

Addressing the enormous destructive power of conventional armaments continues to be of the utmost importance for the international community, especially in the context of regional security. Today we must tackle the issues of the illicit transfer, accumulation and misuse of conventional arms at the highest level of responsibility. We must stress once again that the Russian military aggression against Ukraine, which uses regular military forces armed with modern types of conventional armaments and ammunition, has significantly damaged the existing system of conventional arms control.

The Russian Federation has continued its massive transfers of military equipment to our territory, both in Crimea and eastern Ukraine, thereby deliberately destabilizing security not only in the subregion but in the whole of Europe, while totally ignoring the international community's persistent calls for establishing effective border controls. Among other things, such illegal transfers are a threat and a challenge to the effective implementation of the Programme of Action, which serves as the sole universal international tool that addresses the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. We have no right to ignore the illicit channelling of conventional weapons from the Russian Federation to the Russia-guided illegal armed groups operating in certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine.

Ukraine recognizes the important role of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) in addressing post-conflict remedial measures in order to minimize the occurrence, risk and effects of explosive remnants of war. As a State party for more than 10 years to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Production, Stockpiling and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, Ukraine acknowledges its fundamental character in reducing the occurrence, risk and effects of landmines. Despite Ukraine's current significant security challenges resulting from

the hybrid war being waged against our country, we fully comply with our obligations under these treaties.

As a result of the armed aggression of Russia and the offensive actions being carried out by the Russia-guided illegal armed groups operating in certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine, our country is now having to deal with a drastic increase in the number of dangerous explosive remnants of war, which are causing severe casualties among civilians, including children. Along with anti-personnel mines, which have indiscriminate effects, such explosive remnants are planted by illegal armed groups in residential areas and on communication routes between them, thus violating the Mine Ban Treaty. In fact, they pose a greater threat to civilians than to military personnel. Ukraine believes it is vital that the international community make every effort to ensure proper implementation of the CCW and the Mine Ban Treaty. Ukraine attaches great importance to further deepening cooperation with international partners in this area.

The Acting Chair (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on the representative of Argentina, who will introduce draft resolution A/C.1/71/L.8.

Ms. Mac Loughlin (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): The delegation of Argentina would like to associate itself with the statement on conventional weapons delivered by the representative of Venezuela on behalf of the Union of South American Nations (see A/C.1/71/PV.15).

Today I am honoured to introduce draft resolution A/C.1/71/L.8, "Information on confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms", on behalf of more than 60 delegations. The draft resolution's sponsors are listed in the document.

The Committee will recall that Argentina's initiative in introducing this draft resolution was part of an effort to renew the dialogue on this issue that take place during the Disarmament Commission's substantive sessions in 2000, 2001 and 2003. At the time, it was known that important developments were taking place regarding confidence-building measures in various parts of the world, but that delegations lacked information about them.

The goal of draft resolution A/C.1/71/L.8 has always been, and continues to be, to improve our understanding of the new developments taking place. The draft

resolution is not prescriptive; rather, it aims exclusively at getting Member States to voluntarily provide information about the confidence-building measures they have adopted and at having the Secretary-General provide assistance in establishing and maintaining an electronic database of the information submitted voluntarily by States and helping them, upon request, to organize workshops and seminars. Argentina once again expresses its gratitude for the support it has received and invites those delegations that have not yet become sponsors to do so.

In conclusion, Argentina hopes that the draft resolution will once again be adopted by consensus.

Mr. Koita (Mali) (*spoke in French*): Taking the floor for the first time, I would like to express my pleasure at seeing the representative of Algeria, brother country and friend to Mali, chairing the work of the First Committee at its seventy-first session. I would like to assure the Chair of the full support of delegation of Mali as it conducts the Committee's work. I would also like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the Secretary-General for the quality of the various reports submitted for our review on to the issue of small arms and light weapons.

The delegation of Mali aligns itself with the statements made, respectively, by the representatives of Nigeria and Indonesia on behalf of the African Group and the Non-Aligned Movement (see A/C.1/71/PV.15). My delegation would like to make a few comments in its national capacity.

Despite initiatives undertaken over the past few years by the international community with the aim of preventing, combating and eradicating the illicit trade of light weapons in all its aspects, this criminal activity sadly continues to lead to conflicts, exacerbate violence and fuel terrorism and organized crime in many countries throughout the world. With respect to my country, Mali, it is clear that the illicit distribution of light weapons of all types to terrorist groups and other non-State entities is dangerously fuelling the security crisis in the northern regions. This ongoing trafficking remains a major obstacle to the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali and undermines the efforts of the Malian Government in terms of the country's economic, social and cultural development.

My delegation is pleased that, in the framework of taking up the crisis in Mali, the Security Council has

through its various resolutions on my country called on the international community to assist Mali in addressing the issue of the proliferation and illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons. In that regard, I wish to invite the international community, as a guarantor of the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali, to fully assume its role in order to accelerate the quartering of the combatants of armed groups and the process of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, so as to considerably reduce the illicit circulation of small arms and light weapons in my country and the region.

The fight against the illicit trade and circulation of small arms and light weapons can be effective only if carried out in synergy and with collaboration and cooperation at regional and international levels. It is in that context that the Heads of State and Government of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) adopted, on 14 June 2006, the ECOWAS Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons, Their Ammunition and other Related Materials, in order to regulate the production and circulation of such weapons and their being held by civilians. This is a collective measure for combating these weapons, which are the principal cause of insecurity in Western Africa.

In the implementation of this Convention, the Government of Mali, through its National Commission for the Fight against the Proliferation of Small Arms, has undertaken several measures to raise awareness and recover weapons illegally obtained by civilians throughout our national territory. With the support of its partners, the Government of Mali will continue those efforts.

My delegation welcomes the entry into force of the Arms Trade Treaty, in December 2014, whose effective implementation of will surely provide the appropriate response to the illicit trafficking of light weapons. In that regard, I am pleased to highlight that Mali was among the first to ratify the Treaty and is determined to support the efforts of the international community in reinforcing mechanisms that combat trafficking and in improving coordination and assistance in order to provide a better response to the real needs of those countries that are victims of the uncontrolled dissemination of conventional weapons.

In the same vein, the delegation of Mali, on behalf of the ECOWAS States, introduces each year in the First Committee the draft resolution entitled "Assistance to

States for curbing the illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons and collecting them" (A/C.1/71/L.32). We therefore take this opportunity to urgently call on the States Members of the United Nations to reaffirm their support for the draft resolution.

In conclusion, I wish to reaffirm the commitment of the Government of Mali to continuing and intensifying its efforts in combating the proliferation of light weapons in all aspects, which is a fundamental precondition for stability and for consolidating peace in the country.

Ms. D'Ambrosio (Italy): Italy aligns itself with the statement made by the observer of the European Union (see A/C.1/71/PV.15), to which I would like to add some remarks in my national capacity.

Italy strongly supports all international instruments designed to restrict or prohibit the use of weapons in violation of international humanitarian law. The Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and its Protocols play a central role in that regard, and their universalization and full implementation remain fundamental goals. Italy is ready to make its contribution to a successful fifth Review Conference, which will be an opportunity to take stock of the work conducted in the past five years and lay the foundation for our efforts in the next intersessional cycle. In particular, we look forward to the adoption of the Declaration on Improvised Explosive Devices and the establishment of a Group of Governmental Experts charged with continuing discussions on lethal autonomous weapon systems.

The continued and full implementation of the 1997 Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and of the Oslo Convention on Cluster Munitions is another priority for Italy, given these Conventions' unique contribution to addressing the indiscriminate, humanitarian and socioeconomic impact of these weapons, especially on civilians. At the national level, we successfully completed the destruction of our national stockpiles of both anti-personnel mines, in 2002, and cluster munitions, in 2015. In that regard, Italy has developed in-depth expertise in demilitarization and dismantlement technologies, as well as up-to-date plants on our national territory. At the international level, whereas much has been done to implement the 2015 Dubrovnik Action Plan and the 2014 Maputo Action Plan, challenges remain. Mindful of the central

role of cooperation and assistance in addressing these challenges, Italy continues to allocate material, technical and financial resources to the implementation of comprehensive mine-action programmes.

These programmes relate to any kind of explosive remnant of war, including landmines and cluster munitions, and focus on clearance, stockpile destruction, risk education, physical and psychological rehabilitation and socioeconomic reintegration of the victims. Since 2001, Italy has devoted approximately €50 million to mine-action programmes focused on clearance, stockpile destruction and assistance to victims. Recipients have included, *inter alia*, Afghanistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Colombia, Gaza, Iraq, Jordan and Somalia and populations in Syria.

Besides financial assistance, we also provide training programmes and technical knowledge with respect to demining. Such activities depend on partnerships with relevant stakeholders, including the United Nations, other international and regional organizations, civil society and representatives of survivor groups. In that regard, we have established long-term cooperation with the United Nations Mine Action Service, a key partner in our mine-action programmes.

We continue to contribute to mine action through our chairmanship of the Mine Action Support Group. Since last September, together with Chile, Italy has assumed the role of Coordinator of the Oslo Convention's Committee on Victim Assistance.

During the past decades, the international community has become increasingly aware of the pernicious consequences of the illicit, unregulated or irresponsible transfer of conventional arms. Italy is committed to the effective implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and the International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons, which play a fundamental role in countering these negative impacts.

We welcome the decisions taken by the second Conference of States Parties to the ATT, which has now established the institutional structure of the Treaty. The full implementation and universalization of the Treaty remain challenges that we consider to be crucial objectives for the coming years. We also consider the universalization and effective implementation of the

Palermo Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, their Parts and Components and Ammunition to be crucial objectives. We also welcome the joint statement on the illicit manufacture, transfer and circulation of Small Arms and Light Weapons delivered by the representative of France (see A/C.1/71/PV.16), to which we have subscribed together with a broad group of countries as a reiteration of the international community's commitment towards countering the illicit proliferation of such weapons.

Finally, I would like to emphasize the key role of civil society in our common effort to achieve disarmament and arms control, as well as to reiterate our support for an expanded partnership with civil society institutions at all levels.

Mr. Hai (Singapore): Singapore reiterates its support for the Chair and the members of the Bureau in our work aimed at achieving concrete outcomes at this session.

Singapore aligns itself with the statements delivered, respectively, by the representatives of Indonesia and Thailand on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (see A/C.1/71/PV.15 and A/C.1/71/PV.16).

Singapore reaffirms the sovereign right of States to acquire arms for legitimate defence and responsible law-enforcement purposes. As a matter of principle, States should also fulfil their legal and international obligations with regard to the production and distribution of conventional arms. The illicit diversion of arms has been a key enabler of armed conflicts and has led to greater violence, which in turn threatens global peace, security and social and economic development. Singapore fully supports international efforts to deal with the threat posed by the illicit arms trade.

Singapore has consistently supported and complied with the common international standards for the transfer of conventional arms. As one of the world's busiest transshipment ports, which manages one fifth of the world's shipping containers, Singapore is committed to playing its part in eliminating the threat posed by illicit arms trade. Singapore demonstrated this commitment by signing the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), in December 2014. Singapore welcomes the entry into force of the ATT and actively participated in the second Conference of States Parties to the Treaty in Geneva, in August 2016. Singapore is reviewing its domestic processes and will work towards early ratification.

The United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and the International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons are effective levers for curbing the illicit production and trafficking of small arms and light weapons. Singapore fully supports the efforts of the United Nations and other forms of international coordination aimed at tackling that illicit trade. We have put in place robust arms-manufacture legislation, and our export policies are in line with the obligations set forth under various Security Council resolutions. We are also pleased that significant progress was achieved at the sixth Biennial Meeting of States, in 2016, which will help to advance the implementation of the Programme of Action and International Tracing Instrument.

Singapore has also played a constructive role as a member of the Group of Governmental Experts reporting on the United Nations Register on Conventional Arms. Through the Group's collective efforts, the Register's voluntary reporting instrument was strengthened to better reflect transparency in international arms transfers and developments in conventional arms. We need to build on the progress achieved and work to encourage more countries to use the Register's voluntary reporting instrument.

The indiscriminate use of anti-personnel mines, cluster munitions and conventional weapons has had adverse humanitarian impacts, especially when directed at defenceless civilians. Singapore continues to support initiatives against the indiscriminate use of such weapons pursuant to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects, the Ottawa Convention and the Convention on Cluster Munitions.

Before I conclude, I would like to reaffirm my country's support for international efforts aimed at combating the illicit arms trade and the indiscriminate use of conventional arms. My delegation stands ready to work with the First Committee and fellow Member States to preserve peace and security through disarmament.

Mr. Alokly (Libya) (*spoke in Arabic*): First of all, Libya expresses its support for the statements on conventional weapons made on behalf of the Movement

of Non-Aligned Countries and the Group of African States (see A/C.1/71/PV.16 and PV.15).

The fighting in Libya that started with the revolution has continued sporadically until today, created a security vacuum and led to the proliferation of arms — all of which is causing the country to suffer. The former regime's unlocking of arms and munitions warehouses resulted in the dispersion of Libya's arsenal both inside and outside the country.

Conventional weapons are among the most widely dispersed weapons in any armed conflict. They are the cause of many fatalities and injured people, leading to great human suffering. Over the course of many years, there was no registry of conventional-weapon transactions, which fuelled conflict and increased regional strife. Libya believes that the adoption of the Arms Trade Treaty plays an important role in monitoring and regulating that trade. Accordingly, Libya signed the Treaty on 9 July 2013, as a reaffirmation of its commitment to combating the illicit arms trade and to embodying international norms so that such weapons do not reach other parts of the world. We think that the Treaty will limit the illicit trade in conventional weapons, and we reiterate the sovereign right of all States to regulate the conventional weapons in their own territories in accordance with their own laws and constitutions.

At the same time, we reaffirm the principles embodied in international law, such as the right to self-defence, the preservation of the unity and territorial integrity of States, and the fight against occupation. Double standards are unacceptable, as are preconditions that are subject to interpretations dictated by political interests and positions taken to apply pressure or commit political blackmail.

We welcomed the sixth Biennial Meeting of States on the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and we are looking forward to the third Review Conference on the United Nations Programme of Action, to be held in 2018. The Programme of Action must be implemented, which needs to be done on the basis of the achievements already made.

Libya shares the international community's concern about anti-personnel mines, which cause human tragedy, have negative environmental impacts and hamper development. Libya has been affected

by those weapons since the Second World War. It believes that the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction plays an important role. However, the Convention neglects the effects that explosive remnants of war can have on States, especially since some States have been the theatres of confrontation and conflict between other States. Furthermore, the Convention did not set up mechanisms for helping States that have been affected by anti-personnel mines, with the colonial countries picking up the costs of eliminating and clearing them.

Libya also expresses its concern regarding the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects and its Protocols, as the Convention does not take into account the considerations of developing countries that have to use other technologies and weapons for their national defence. For example, the Protocol does not cover mines, which affects many countries, including Libya.

Finally, certain delegations in our deliberations have referred to the use of cluster munitions. However, the Libyan weapons arsenal never included such weaponry. We have to determine who produces those weapons, engages in their illicit trade and exports them to non-State groups.

Ms. Donelly (New Zealand): It is a challenge to adhere to a five-minute time limit, Madam Chair, when considering the horror being visited upon civilians and their communities by the use of certain conventional weapons in a range of current conflicts. New Zealand, like so many others here, is outraged at the violation of international humanitarian law, at the use of illegal weapons and at the illicit use of other types of weapons, including through the targeting of civilians, humanitarian and relief workers, medical staff and related facilities. Our outrage at these breaches of international humanitarian law provides an additional catalyst for moving forward on the items on this Committee's agenda.

New Zealand negotiated on, agreed to and joined the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) as a means of achieving the many security and humanitarian benefits of a better regulated trade in conventional weapons, including small arms and light weapons. We are pleased to have served as a Vice-President of the second Conference

of States Parties to the ATT under the presidency of Nigeria, and will continue to work with the new President, Finland, and the rest of the ATT family to ensure that the infrastructure we have put in place delivers on the Treaty's promise. We will continue to play our part, including through our membership of the Selection Committee of the ATT's Voluntary Trust Fund and through our funding of universalization and implementation projects in the Pacific and in Africa. We also warmly welcome the new appointments to the Secretariat under the able leadership of Simeon Dumisani Dladla.

New Zealand remains committed to building on the success of the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM) and to consolidating the norm it sets against the use of these inhumane weapons. New Zealand condemns any use of cluster munitions by any actor and calls on all States to join and implement the Convention as soon as possible. In our role as Coordinator for National Implementation Measures under the CCM, we will continue to work with State parties, signatories and others to promote its effective implementation and universalization. We are grateful for the leadership shown by the Netherlands on this issue and look forward to working with the new President of the Convention, Germany.

New Zealand is also unwavering in its commitment to the CCM's sister treaty, the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction and to its vision for a world free of mines. We were pleased to make a modest contribution to the Convention's Implementation Support Unit this year, alongside our ongoing support for mine-clearance activities around the world. With our eyes firmly on the 2025 target set forth in the Maputo Declaration, we look forward to working with all States and with our valued civil-society partners to finish what we have started.

Following on from the Ottawa Convention's Meeting of States Parties held in Santiago, the international community will turn its attention later in December to the fifth Review Conference of the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects (CCW). It is true that the CCW process has not always been able to deliver an appropriately humanitarian outcome, focused on international humanitarian law, on a number of topics of great concern. We believe our

response in going outside the CCW— when that has been necessary to secure an outcome with an appropriate emphasis on the protection of civilians — has had nothing but positive results.

New Zealand continues its support, in principle, for the framework approach of the CCW. We would certainly hope that the outcome of this year's Review Conference will position the Convention to remain relevant and responsive to contemporary concerns, including on the issues of incendiary weapons, mines other than anti-personnel mines and lethal autonomous weapons systems. With respect to lethal autonomous weapons systems in particular, we must not allow protracted discussions about the modalities of the process to dictate or limit the substantive progress that is necessary, bearing in mind the legal, technical and moral challenges posed by those weapons.

Finally, I wish to reiterate New Zealand's strong support for the development of a political declaration as part of an international effort to address the immediate and long-term harm being caused to civilians by the use of explosive weapons with wide-area effects in densely populated areas. We look forward to working with all interested parties to ensure that such a declaration is meaningful and effective and that it complements the important civilian protections that are promised but, regrettably, often violated under international humanitarian law.

Mr. Kuglitsch (Austria): Austria aligns itself with the statement delivered earlier by the Observer of the European Union (see A/C.1/71/PV.16). In my national capacity, I would like to highlight a few priority issues for Austria.

The prevention of human suffering and assistance to victims of armed conflict and armed violence must remain at the heart of our efforts. Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) was the first to address the disproportionate and unique impact of armed conflict on women. In Austria's view, a gender perspective should be incorporated in all disarmament, arms-control and non-proliferation efforts. The full and equal participation of women and men at all stages and levels of decision-making should be ensured.

The indiscriminate effects and unacceptable humanitarian consequences of anti-personnel mines and cluster munitions have led to those weapons being banned. Nevertheless, those weapons continue to cost human life and cause human tragedy. That serves to

underscores the necessity for the full universalization of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction and the Convention on Cluster Munitions. Austria reiterates that the obligation to protect civilians from unnecessary harm already currently applies to all States.

Austria is proud to assume the chairmanship of the Ottawa Convention in 2017. We will strive hard to further all the aims of the Convention. Victim assistance has always been the focus of Austria's attention, and that will continue to be the case.

The first Review Conference of the Convention on Cluster Munitions, as well as the sixth Meeting of States Parties, held in Geneva last September, were an opportunity to take stock of the successful first five years of the Convention. By adopting a Political Declaration and the Dubrovnik Action Plan, the Conference created important guidance for our future work. As coordinator, along with Chile, Austria was pleased to have contributed to advancing effective cooperation and assistance among all relevant stakeholders and across regions. At the same time, Austria remains seriously concerned about reports of the continued use of cluster munitions in a number of ongoing conflicts. We call on all actors to refrain from the use of such weapons with indiscriminate effects.

Austria would also like to specifically highlight its concern about the use of explosive weapons in populated areas as a major cause of harm inflicted on civilians in many countries. An increasing number of Governments share this concern. Civilian casualties from explosive weapons in urban settings reached a documented total of more than 40,000 deaths and injuries in 2014 alone, a statistic that was dramatically higher than that of military casualties and reflected a disproportionate effect on women and children. This is a humanitarian problem of extreme gravity, and the recent bombing of Aleppo is a tragic example of that. Unfortunately, there are other examples as well, including the growing numbers of refugees who are currently being forced to leave their war-ridden homes. Many people are desperate to find shelter abroad precisely because of violence and the use of explosive weapons in their countries of origin and the lack or breakdown of protection for civilian populations. And these people, I might add, are the lucky ones.

In 2015, Austria and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs jointly convened an international expert meeting on the problem, in Vienna, which included representatives of approximately 20 States, the International Committee of the Red Cross and various United Nations agencies, as well as civil society representatives. The meeting highlighted the importance of awareness-raising on the basis of continuing collection and dissemination of data, as well as the sharing and promotion of States' good practices in using explosive weapons. Significant support was expressed at a side event co-organized by Austria for a group of like-minded States on 4 October here in New York. We proposed to issue an international political declaration to prevent civilian harm caused by the use of explosive weapons in populated areas. The Secretary-General has encouraged all States to engage constructively in such an initiative.

As one of the first States to sign and ratify the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), Austria welcomed the speedy entry into force of the Treaty, on 24 December 2014. The second Conference of States Parties, held in Geneva in August 2016, further defined the institutional framework for the effective implementation and universalization of the ATT. The Treaty is an important contribution to human security, human rights and development.

I would like to mention in passing the Group of Governmental Experts on the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms. We welcome the results from the Group's last round of meetings.

Before I conclude, I would like to state another of my country's concerns for the record, namely, the prospect of the development of lethal autonomous-weapons systems. Given the fast pace of technological innovations, we risk crossing a very dangerous threshold soon. We should be very careful to make sure that the application of such technologies is consistent with ethical, political and legal imperatives. We are therefore in favour of deepening and intensifying the ongoing international debate on lethal autonomous-weapons systems.

Mr. Ejinaka (Nigeria): My delegation restates its confidence, Madam Chair, in your experience and ability to steer this ship to a purposeful destination.

Nigeria aligns itself with the statements delivered under this cluster on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and the Group of African States (see A/C.1/71/PV.15).

Over the years, people have died needlessly from conventional arms and ammunition produced primarily for the defence and security needs of nation States and other lawful uses. Our debates on this cluster during the past two days have so far demonstrated the magnitude and continued challenge that we face globally regarding the scourge of the proliferation of illicitly acquired conventional weapons. Such weapons can be found in old and new weapons systems, including anti-personnel landmines, lethal autonomous-weapons systems and improvised explosive devices, among others.

A large portion of the global population, including many people in my country, have seen, heard and experienced the consequences of illicit small arms and light weapons in the hands of criminal gangs, terrorists and various armed groups and militants. Those weapons have continued to undermine otherwise peaceful societies, elicited internal displacement and are responsible for hundreds of deaths every day. For instance, small arms and light weapons are responsible for more than 500,000 deaths every year. There is abundant evidence that violence perpetrated by arms in conflicts kills on average approximately 600,000 people annually. From Africa to the Middle East, the unprecedented carnage and bloodshed unleashed by terrorists and other armed militias have left cities and communities destroyed or deserted and entailed the loss of precious lives, property and livelihoods.

Accordingly, my delegation commends the renewed efforts of all States and welcomes the sixth Biennial Meeting of States on the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, in which Nigeria fully participated, but, in particular, commends the noble work of Ambassador Courtenay Rattray. The consensus adoption of the outcome document is commendable in view of its efforts to address numerous issues, including by highlighting the significance of the linkage between the Programme of Action, the International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons and Sustainable Development Goal 16. We look forward with much hope to the third Review Conference of the Programme of Action, to be held in 2018.

My delegation also welcomes the successful outcome of the second Conference of States Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty, under the presidency of Nigeria, and reiterates the need for a robust, effective

and non-discriminatory implementation of numerous instruments already in place as tools for regulating the global transfer of conventional weapons. We urge States, particularly large weapons-producing and weapons-exporting States not yet parties to the Treaty, to ensure their timely accession. That is because we no longer think in theoretical terms of the risk of terrorists obtaining and using conventional weapons on a large scale, as they already possess them, effectively deploying them for their greatest impact. My delegation wishes to take this opportunity to express its best wishes to Finland during its presidency of the third Conference of States Parties, in 2017.

We look forward to working with other delegations and, with their cooperation, to translating the vision of international peace and security into a reality for our future and that of our children.

Mr. Ismail (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, the delegation of Egypt aligns itself with the statement made on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/71/PV.15).

We are concerned about the extremely dangerous economic, social and humanitarian impact of the illicit trade of small arms and light weapons, especially because, in many cases, such weapons often fall into the hands of non-State actors, including terrorist and criminal groups. In that context, we urge the international community, in particular exporting and manufacturing countries, to devote additional effort and work together towards addressing this dangerous phenomenon.

We reiterate our ongoing commitment to the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and the International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons, and emphasize the importance of implementing them. Accordingly, Egypt welcomes the outcome document of the sixth Biennial Meeting of States on the Programme of Action, held in New York in June 2016. We hope to achieve international consensus on this important political mechanism at the third Review Conference, to be held in 2018.

With respect to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, Egypt would like to stress that the Convention should be enforced in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations while respecting the rights of States to

their self-defence, the integrity of their territories, the right of self-determination of peoples under foreign occupation and the non-admissibility of the occupation of the territories of others. However, we must safeguard the right to produce, import, export and transfer conventional weapons.

We must focus on weapons-manufacturing and weapons-exporting countries. We must strike a balance between the importing and exporting countries in terms of responsibility. We therefore urge the world to deal with the major imbalance that exists between developed and developing countries in the area of conventional-weapons production. In that context, we affirm the sovereign right of States to possess, export, import and manufacture conventional weapons for their self-defence and to meet their security needs. We must also not allow unjustified risks in transfers of conventional arms.

We are deeply concerned about the explosive materials and mines that exist on our territory, including remnants from the Second World War, particularly in the form of landmines, which cause material and humanitarian damage and hinder development plans in Egypt. We call upon the countries responsible for laying those mines in Egypt to shoulder their responsibilities and cooperate with the affected countries, especially in terms of better information- and map-sharing, in order to identify the location of the explosive materials and mines, offering technical assistance, assuming part of the financial costs and providing compensation to countries for the damage caused by those mines.

Enormous technological advances in the field of lethal autonomous-weapons systems must serve as an impetus for the international community and relevant United Nations agencies to focus more on the emerging challenges and threats posed by such weapons. They must take into account that there are gaps in the international disarmament regime whose legal, humanitarian and ethical aspects must be discussed in order to ensure necessary control over the development and use of artificial intelligence for military purposes and implement rules for managing this area.

Mr. Mažeiks (Latvia): As this is the first time Latvia takes the floor at this session, we would like to congratulate the Chair on his election to guide the work of the First Committee and to assure him of the full cooperation of the Latvian delegation.

Latvia fully subscribes to the statement delivered by the Observer of the European Union (see A/C.1/71/PV.15). I would like to make the following remarks in my national capacity.

Latvia remains firmly committed to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) and its Protocols. We regard the CCW as an important forum for increasing awareness of the existing challenges and for addressing emerging issues by gathering competent diplomatic, legal and military expertise. In that regard, we appreciate the continued discussions on improvised explosive devices and lethal autonomous-weapons systems. We hope that at the fifth Review Conference, to be held in December, we will be able to agree on the next steps to effectively take these discussions further.

Latvia supports the efforts aimed at the universalization of the CCW and the annexed Protocols. In particular, as President of several annual conferences on the Amended Protocol II, Latvia has urged the States that have not yet done so to join it. We also call for the full implementation of all provisions of the Convention and its Protocols. Latvia shares the concerns of the international community on the alleged use of air-dropped incendiary weapons in civilian areas in Syria.

Latvia supports the universalization and full implementation of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention. Anti-personnel mines and unexploded ordnance of war pose a significant threat to civilians long after an armed conflict has ended. In the field of unexploded ordnance, Latvia continues to share expertise and provide assistance to a number of countries. In 2002, with the support of Norway, Latvia established the Explosive Ordnance Disposal Training Centre within the National Armed Forces of Latvia. Since its opening, high-level training and capacity-building have been provided to multiple experts from various countries, especially focusing on countries in our neighbourhood, such as Ukraine and Georgia. Latvian experts have also participated in operations in Kosovo, Iraq and Afghanistan, with the aim of protecting civilians from post-conflict suffering caused by unexploded and abandoned ordnance. Latvia is also planning to continue these efforts in future.

The international community is showing increased awareness of the widespread serious threats posed by the illicit and uncontrolled trade of conventional weapons, including small arms and light weapons and

their ammunition. In particular, Latvia would like to highlight the importance of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), as it promotes transparency and accountability in the conventional-arms trade, thus serving as an effective instrument for achieving responsible trade in arms. Latvia commends the successful outcome of the second Conference of States Parties to the ATT and welcomes the significant decisions adopted there, which include, inter alia, the establishment of working groups on transparency and reporting, implementation and universalization. The adoption of these essential decisions and their thorough implementation by all State parties will further promote the aims of the ATT.

Latvia also reiterates its full support for the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects; the International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons; and the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms. Latvia has a robust national export-control system in force and participates in the activities of international conventional-arms export-control regimes. We would like to note that Latvia continuously stands ready to provide assistance, mostly through European Union outreach programmes and by sharing its expertise and know-how in conventional-arms-export control.

I would like to conclude by reaffirming Latvia's full support and commitment to the conventional weapons treaties and instruments I mentioned, given their role in contributing to stability and security at the regional and global levels.

Mr. Oumar (Niger) (*spoke in French*): As this is the first time my delegation is taking the floor during the seventy-first session, I would like to congratulate the Chair on his election to conduct the work of the First Committee. I also wish to congratulate the other members of the Bureau on their elections and assure them of the full cooperation of my delegation.

My delegation aligns itself with the statements delivered, respectively, by the representatives of Indonesia and Nigeria on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and the Group of African States (see A/C.1/71/PV.15 and A/C.1/71/PV.16). I would like to make the following statement in my national capacity.

The issue of disarmament in general and the issue of control over the production, sale, use and trade of many types of conventional weapons, especially

small arms and light weapons, are important subjects in promoting international peace and security. As a peace-loving State that is conscious of the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, the Niger has signed and ratified almost all regional and international legal documents related to disarmament, namely, the Economic Community of West African States Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons, Their Ammunition and Other Related Materials, which we signed on 19 January 2007, the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects of 2001; the International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons; and the Arms Trade Treaty of 2013, which Niger signed on 23 March 2014 and ratified on 24 July 2015.

West Africa and the Sahel continue to be severely affected by the uncontrolled circulation and proliferation of firearms and ammunition owing to armed conflicts and their impact in these regions. The emergence of Boko Haram in Nigeria in 2009 and its spread throughout the Lake Chad basin and the events occurring in Libya and Mali in 2011 and 2012 illustrate the fragility of arms control. The control of firearms is therefore a cross-cutting objective in the prevention and resolution of armed conflicts, terrorism and transnational organized crime. As such, it must remain a key element in policies for the maintenance of peace and security.

With that in mind, since 1994 the Niger has had in place a national commission for the collection and control of illegal weapons, which is charged with implementing at the national level all the weapons treaties, agreements, conventions and resolutions that our country has endorsed. The commission, which is a part of the civilian Cabinet of the presidency of the Republic, has already developed and adopted several domestic laws on the implementation of disarmament treaties. At the operational level, it has also undertaken several projects on demining, pollution control and the recovery of illegal weapons, including the recovery of 1,800 weapons and 100 anti-tank mines, the digging up and destruction of 960 anti-personnel mines and the recovery of over 19,000 pieces of ammunition. Currently, with the support of such partners as the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa and the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs, the commission continues to

pursue a comprehensive programme to safeguard and manage the weapons stockpiles of our national defence and security forces.

This type of partnership aims to contribute to the security and stability of the Sahel by providing assistance to countries concerned in the prevention of the spread of small arms and light weapons, illicit trafficking and the promotion of physical security and stockpile management. In that regard, my delegation urges international cooperation and assistance in this area, especially because of the challenges that technological and electronic advances pose to the national tracing and traffic-control systems for small arms and light weapons. We also encourage the international community to redouble its efforts with a view to the universalization of the Arms Trade Treaty, whose importance in controlling the movement of weapons at the global level is well known.

Mr. Nkoloi (Botswana): My delegation aligns itself with the statements made, respectively, by the representatives of Indonesia and Nigeria on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and the Group of African States (A/C.1/71/PV.15 and A/C.1/71/PV.16). However, I wish to make a statement on behalf of my country.

Botswana gives great importance to the attainment of international peace and security, which is why we join the international community in deploring the continuing human rights violations on de facto battlefields around the world where innocent civilians have become casualties of merciless killings by warring factions. The thematic discussion on conventional weapons is very important in that it touches on the weapons that are the most extensively circulated and whose use is widespread. In that respect, we remain concerned about the illicit transfer, manufacture and circulation of these weapons, particularly small arms and light weapons, in many regions of the world. In that regard, we hold the view that the destruction of surplus, seized, collected, confiscated and forfeited weapons and ammunition is key to reducing the burden of managing large stocks and security systems available for illicit circulation.

Recently, my delegation participated in 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. We note with satisfaction the successful conclusion of that meeting,

particularly the endeavour to link the United Nations Programme of Action on Small Arms with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Today's environment is characterized by complex interdependence, technological advancement and large flows of people, goods and services. Any successful effort to combat the illicit proliferation of small arms and light weapons requires cooperation at various levels among Member States. Accordingly, Botswana continues to play its role through active participation in such organizations as the Southern African Regional Police Chiefs Cooperation Organization and the bilateral joint commissions on defence and security. We do so with a view to conducting cross-border and coordinated operations with neighbouring States in order to prevent and combat illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons.

Cooperation and assistance measures remain critical to determining the success or failure of national efforts. It is therefore important that continued assistance be afforded to those nations that lack the requisite skills and resources in order that they may achieve concrete results in implementing the Programme of Action and other measures agreed to by the international community.

My delegation acknowledges that States develop and acquire conventional arms for legitimate protection of their interests. In addition, such weapons may be deployed to promote and preserve international peace and security. However, we are worried by the deployment of high-calibre projectiles, particularly those with a wide area of impact. Recent conflicts have demonstrated this aspect in a very elaborate manner, through the images of the wanton destruction of infrastructure and the demolition of property that can be seen through different forms of media, such as television, just to name one.

Furthermore, recent technological developments, such as the use of unmanned air vehicles, drones and autonomous weapons, further complicate this matter. While recognizing the strategic and operational requirements for such weaponry, we hold the view that there is a need for serious and sober interrogation on their use. The established body of public international law, such as international humanitarian law, *inter alia*, should guide and inform such discourse.

Finally, all acquisitions of arms, both small and large, come at a huge price, giving rise thereby to an

opportunity cost. For most nations, meagre resources are diverted to procure arms while economic and social development programmes are neglected. This has a negative impact on our desire as leaders to provide a better life for our people. That the 2030 Agenda will be affected can indeed not be doubted.

In conclusion, I wish to reiterate that security and development are inextricably intertwined and that the absence of one would have a negative impact the other. The First Committee can rest assured that Botswana's support for the international community's efforts aimed at promoting international peace and security is guaranteed.

Mr. Li Chunjie (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The Chinese Government has always attached great importance to various issues arising from conventional weapons. China believes that legal mechanisms should be constantly reinforced in order to balance the military security requirements with the humanitarian concerns of all countries.

The Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons has played an irreplaceable role in addressing the humanitarian concerns caused by the indiscriminate use of conventional weapons. As a high contracting party to the Convention and its five Protocols, China has faithfully fulfilled its obligations under these instruments, actively participated in international cooperation and encouraged countries that have not done so to join the Convention and its Protocols.

China is committed to international humanitarian assistance. Since 1998, the Chinese Government has made donations and contributions in kind and has hosted training programmes. In the area of demining, China has provided humanitarian assistance worth over ¥90 million to more than 40 countries and has trained close to 500 professionals and technical personnel. In September 2015, at the United Nations peacekeeping summit sponsored by the General Assembly, President Xi Jinping announced that China would conduct 10 demining assistance programmes in the coming five years. China is actively fulfilling its commitments by implementing the relevant programmes, and the demining training course for Cambodia is now under way in Nanjing. China will also provide humanitarian assistance materials to Egypt and Laos this year.

In recent years, the humanitarian concerns caused by lethal autonomous weapons systems have received growing international attention. China supports

continued and in-depth discussions on the issue so that mutual understanding is gradually enhanced and a consensus is reached among countries to jointly address the challenges caused by lethal autonomous weapons systems.

Improvised explosive devices have increasingly become a major tool used by terrorist, extremist and criminal organizations to create chaos. China has always been committed to exercising strict control over explosives used by civilians and military arsenals and chemicals that could be used to produce improvised explosive devices, and it has supported and actively taken part in the relevant international discussions.

At present, terrorist and extremist forces are increasingly rampant, perpetuating turbulence and exacerbating the humanitarian crises in some regions. The illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and certain countries' irresponsible transfer of such weapons to non-State actors have further aggravated the situation.

China believes that it is imperative to address both the root causes and symptoms of these issues. First, it is important to use the United Nations as the main channel to facilitate the full and effective implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action on Small Arms and the International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons. Secondly, Governments should take primary responsibility for combating the illicit trade in arms, adhere to the non-interference principle and resolve disputes through political and diplomatic means, so as to create conditions for the final resolution of the problem of illicit trade. Thirdly, we should prohibit the transfer of weapons to non-State actors, which is fundamental to guaranteeing non-proliferation of small arms and maintaining regional and international peace and security. This should be a norm acceptable to all parties concerned.

China endorses the international measures needed to regulate the international trade of conventional weapons. China constructively participated in the negotiations of the Arms Trade Treaty, as well as in the Conference of States Parties as an observer, which fully demonstrates our support for the purpose of the Treaty. China will continuously make efforts to establish a just order for international arms trade and properly address

illicit arms transfers in order to maintain regional and international peace and stability.

China attaches importance to military transparency and is committed to enhancing military mutual trust with other countries. In recent years, China has made early submissions to the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms on the number of weapons transfers made during the previous year and has actively participated in the work of the Group of Governmental Experts. China is committed to enhancing the Register's universality and effectiveness and will continue its efforts in this regard.

Mr. Robotjazi (Islamic Republic of Iran): I align myself with the statement made by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/71/PV.15).

The Islamic Republic of Iran reaffirms the inherent sovereign right of any State to acquire, manufacture, import and retain conventional arms for its self-defence and legitimate security needs. Sharing the concerns over increasing global military expenditure, Iran is of the view that, as rightly put by the Secretary-General, where our world is over-armed and peace is underfunded, redoubling international efforts directed at "the least diversion for armaments of the world's human and economic resources", as stated in Article 26 of the Charter of the United Nations, is more relevant than ever before.

Such efforts are of the utmost importance in a region like the Middle East, where the already complicated security situation — a result of the possession of nuclear weapons, other weapons of mass destruction and a large arsenal of offensive conventional weapons by the Israeli regime, together with its expansionist policy — has been exacerbated in recent years by the large flow of foreign terrorist fighters, aggression against Yemen and huge arms imports by certain oil-rich countries and the manifold increase in their military budgets.

Despite being surrounded and affected by such situations, the Islamic Republic of Iran continues to have one of the lowest levels of military expenditure in a region where a surge in the number of weapons purchased by a certain oil-rich Persian Gulf State alone helped to push global arms sales up by more than 10 per cent in 2015, placing that country at the top of the list of the largest arms-importing countries in the world. Such weapons, mostly imported from Western countries, in particular the United States and the United Kingdom,

have been used by the Saudi-led coalition, backed by the United States, in its 20-month-long aggressive against Yemen. The latest atrocity associated with this aggression was the deliberate bombing of a funeral gathering in which at least 150 civilians were killed and 500 others wounded.

Both the Israeli regime, also backed by the United States, and Saudi Arabia use such arms to destroy houses, hospitals, schools, markets and mosques, killing civilians and keeping the people of Gaza and Yemen, respectively, under a brutal siege. They commit, in short, all four core international crimes: genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and the crime of aggression. Irresponsible arms exports facilitate the commission of these crimes.

It was exactly for the sake of preventing the occurrence of such crimes that, during the negotiations on the Arms Trade Treaty, Iran insisted on including in the draft Treaty the prohibition of the export of arms to aggressors and foreign occupiers. However, this proposal was rejected by certain States that claimed to be responsible arms exporters, but which are now participating in the largest ever arms deals with those who disregard international humanitarian law and are engaged in shedding the blood of innocent Yemeni children.

We strongly call for ceasing such irresponsible arms exports, as we also do for intensifying efforts to prevent the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. As a country actively engaged in the fight against the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, which are also linked to terrorism and drug trafficking, Iran underlines the importance of the full implementation of the International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons and the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, which remain the main international framework in that regard.

Iran is closely following the ongoing debates on the humanitarian concerns related to the military applications of certain new and emerging technologies. Given the sophisticated technical nature of such technologies and the lack of reliable common knowledge about their definitions, scope and different aspects, we believe that, at this stage, discussions should be wholly focused on such aspects of the issue. At the

same time, due to the dual nature of the majority of such technologies, maximum effort is needed to build a common understanding about the role and implications of such technologies in the sustainable development of societies.

Needless to say, in order to be result-oriented and broad-based, such discussions must take place based on a clear General Assembly mandate within the competent United Nations bodies, be open to equal participation of all States and not just a group of States that are parties to a certain convention, and be conducted in a transparent and inclusive manner. Most important, they must be based on consensus. The fact that those are issues closely linked to the security rights, concerns and interest of States, and therefore cannot be defined and decided upon in their absence, shows how important it is to observe those principles.

In that context, it is also worth noting that, at this early stage of these discussions, neither issuing joint declarations, nor defining new principles in a self-serving manner, nor conducting discussions within a closed circle of States, whether inside or outside the United Nations, is helpful. In terms of process and approach, such discussions should, in our view, be pursued progressively, adopt the most possible comprehensive approach, and take into account the concerns and interests of all States in a balanced and non-discriminatory manner. Above all, the cardinal principle governing such discussions must be strict observance of the inherent right of any State to security and self-defence and the inalienable right of every nation to development, so as to ensure that the defence and security rights and the development requirements of any State are not compromised.

The Acting Chair (*spoke in Spanish*): I shall now call on those representatives who have requested the floor to exercise their right of reply. I would remind delegations that the first statement in right of reply should be limited to 10 minutes and the second statement to five minutes.

Mr. Yermakov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Today, from behind the nameplate of Ukraine — a country that is close to our hearts and will remain forever our neighbour, with its people who are brothers to us — the Ukrainian representative made absurd accusations against my country, Russia, to which, unfortunately, we have to react.

I do not see the purpose of a discussion on this matter in the First Committee. In our understanding, nothing that was stated bears any connection with reality, nor does it have anything to do with what is being discussed here in the First Committee. However, I wish to take this opportunity to express our sympathy to the people of Ukraine, our brothers, because we are linked to them by a single shared 1,000-year history. We were and always will be one family.

War was brought upon our common home in February 2014. In Kyiv, the Government was overthrown by an armed anti-constitutional movement, which, to our great surprise, was supported by the United States and the European Union. Pro-fascist ultranationalists came to power and caused a bloody civil war in the country. Those who expressed their opinions against the overthrow of the Government were physically eliminated by the new Kyiv leaders and, as a result, the entire population in the south of the country — more than 5 million people — were characterized as terrorists. The Kyiv authorities sent the regular army there to use heavy artillery and cluster munitions against their own people and began to destroy such infrastructure as kindergartens, schools, hospitals and retirement homes.

According to several statistics, including those released by some NATO countries, Kyiv authorities have already killed up to 10,000 of their own civilians in the south of Ukraine. Of course, those living in that region took up arms and began to defend themselves. We should not forget that they are very good at this, as they are the children and grandchildren of the same people who fought against the same pro-fascist Powers that came to Ukraine at the time of the Hitler aggression in 1941.

Only through the efforts of the leaders of Germany, Russia and France, in February 2015, were we able to agree upon the Minsk agreements to resolve the domestic Ukrainian crisis. It is extremely important to note that President Poroshenko, who came into power after the overthrow of the Government, also signed those agreements.

The agreements require action from the Kyiv authorities. Specifically, they must end their armed attacks against civilians in the south of the country. There must be an amnesty and a full exchange of prisoners. There must be constitutional reforms. They must come to the negotiating table. And they must give an opportunity to those living in the south-east

of the country to determine their own social, economic and political future, and this, I underline, within the Ukrainian State.

What do we now have in terms of results? The Ukrainian authorities have yet to fulfil any of the requirements incumbent upon them. There are, of course, well-known reasons for this. The fulfilment of the Minsk agreements would lead to an end of the internal crisis in Ukraine, which would in turn lead to a constitutional order within the country under which the current Ukrainian authorities, sooner or later, would have to be held accountable for their bloody criminal acts against their own citizens. As we have seen, these crimes have no limit.

We know that two days ago, in Berlin, there was yet another meeting among the leaders of Germany, France and Russia. President Poroshenko was also present. The leaders of Germany, France and Russia demanded that the Ukrainian leader implement the provisions of the Minsk agreements, which, I might add, have been approved by the Security Council and are legally binding. They are therefore the only instrument that can resolve the situation in Ukraine.

We would like to believe that those in Kyiv will come to their senses and end this war against their own population. Then, once again, from behind the nameplate of beautiful Ukraine and on behalf of the beautiful people of Ukraine, the representative of that country will have completely different words for us in the First Committee.

Mr. Leschenko (Ukraine): I too would like to exercise our right of reply and respond to the representative of Russia's rather long and very interesting reaction to our statement.

Briefly, the Ukrainian delegation stands by its earlier statement and would like to underline that the conflict in certain areas of Donetsk and Luhansk regions was caused by Russian aggression against Ukraine, which began with the occupation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea.

With respect to the Minsk agreements, without going into details, I would like to stress that Ukraine complies fully with its obligations under the agreements.

We would like to call upon the Russian Federation to stop emphasizing in each of its statements that the conflict in eastern Ukraine is an internal Ukrainian conflict. That is simply not true, as our Russian

colleagues know perfectly well. If that country withdrew its armaments and military personnel from our territories, the conflict in the Donbass region would be settled peacefully almost immediately and without any outside assistance.

Mr. Mikulsky (United States of America): I take the floor to exercise the right of reply in response to the statement made by the representative of the Russian Federation.

The United States rejects Russia's assertions against the United States, which are pure propaganda. Through its unilateral military actions in Ukraine, including the forcible occupation of Crimea and the insertion of Russian troops in eastern Ukraine, Russia has violated the Charter of the United Nations and its international commitments. I would like to stress that Crimea remains part of Ukraine, and is recognized as such by the international community. We condemn and call for the immediate end to the Russian occupation of Crimea and its ongoing military operations in eastern Ukraine.

Mr. Yermakov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): To be honest, we are witnessing some type

of agony on the part of the departing United States Administration and of those who are currently sitting behind the Ukraine nameplate. Of course, there has been no aggression from the Russian Federation in Ukraine. No such aggression could occur under any conditions. Perhaps that is not what the current American Administration wanted to hear.

As for Crimea, in a historical sense, the issue has been resolved. In the referendum on the issue, 95 per cent of the population of Crimea called for autonomy from the Government that overthrew the previous Government in Ukraine. The population then asked to be returned to Russia. Therefore, whether one likes it or not, in a historical sense, the issue has been resolved once and for all. Crimea is, was and will undeniably be part of the Russian Federation. The issue is closed.

Mr. Leschenko (Ukraine): We totally reject the assertion by the representative of the Russian Federation that Crimea is the territory of the Russian Federation and that the issue has been settled.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.