



General Assembly

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First Committee

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Official Records

Chair: Mr. Boukadoum (Algeria)

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

Agenda items 89 to 105 (continued)

Action on all draft resolutions and decisions submitted under disarmament and international security agenda items

The Chair: This morning we will begin by hearing general statements on a draft resolution contained in cluster 2, “Other weapons of mass destruction”. Delegations are reminded that general statements are limited to five minutes.

Mr. Sawicz (Poland): I am taking the floor with regard to draft resolution A/C.1/71/L.61/Rev.1, entitled “Implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction”, which Poland, as its sole sponsor, has presented every year to this Committee.

For years, the resolution has contributed to international peace and security as well as to the enhanced chemical non-proliferation regime that is based on the Convention and its implementing body, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). Despite a wide variety of complex issues, the resolution has become the cornerstone of chemical non-proliferation and has been able to gain unanimous international support in the past.

Poland strongly believes that this should also be the case this year. The complex challenges to the Convention demand that the international community send an even stronger and more united message of

support for the comprehensive implementation of all the Convention’s pillars. Poland, as sole sponsor of the draft resolution, has factually and accurately described the current state of the Convention’s implementation.

The draft resolution commends OPCW efforts on such fundamental issues as universality, the destruction of chemical-weapon stockpiles, national implementation, verification, the risk posed by the threat of the use of chemical weapons by non-State actors, and last but certainly not least, international cooperation. It also reflects the ongoing work on cases of chemical weapon use in Syria by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism, unanimously established by the Security Council in 2015. The draft resolution could not ignore those developments, as they undermine the fundamental international norm against the use of chemical weapons, which is the bedrock of the Convention.

Building a common understanding of the issue of the use of chemical weapons in Syria has obviously proved extremely challenging. Poland has done its utmost to address the dynamic and changeable situation in a balanced and adequate manner. The final result is therefore the product of a demanding but open and transparent process, involving four rounds of consultation on the draft resolution, conducted on a bilateral basis in The Hague, New York and various capitals, including Warsaw, of course.

More than a century ago, the international community was able to agree on a total ban on the use of chemical weapons. It is the absolute responsibility of

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the United Nations community today, when the use of chemical weapons has again become a reality, to renew and sustain commitments to that goal — in other words, to demonstrate its leadership and resolve on the path to a world free of chemical weapons. In that regard, we call on all Committee members to vote in favour of the draft resolution before us.

Mr. Yermakov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We have worked together on the now traditional draft resolution entitled “Implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction” for many years now. Our main goal has been to universalize the Convention and maintain its integrity and authority. In previous years, as we all know, the work has been exclusively consensus-based, in other words, in full accordance with the principles enshrined in the Convention and the sound traditions that used to exist in that regard.

Unfortunately, in the past few years, due to some States’ unprecedentedly destructive and one-directional politicization regarding the issues of chemical demilitarization in Syria and terrorists’ use of toxic chemicals there, the situation has radically changed both in the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and here in the First Committee.

The conclusions of the third (see S/2016/738/Rev.1) and fourth (see S/2016/888) reports of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism to investigate the use of chemical weapons in Syria are inconclusive, unconvincing and based on far-fetched assumptions. We reject the attempts of some States to use any means necessary to impose those unjustified conclusions on all of us and reflect those false conclusions in the resolutions of the First Committee.

Needless to say, Russia explicitly condemns the use of chemical weapons wherever or by whomever they are used. We urge that all perpetrators of such atrocities be brought to justice. In recent years in the Security Council we have repeatedly tried to call the international community’s attention to the increase in the incidence of the use of chemical weapons by terrorist and extremist organizations. We have called on our colleagues to respond appropriately to the increasing challenges and dangers of chemical terrorism in the Middle East. Unfortunately, every one of our

initiatives, including the draft resolutions presented jointly with our Chinese partners in Security Council meetings, has been routinely blocked by our Western colleagues. What do we have as a result?

We all now acknowledge the fact that terrorists and extremists in that conflict-torn region have already acquired real chemical warfare potential. A prime example of that is the incontestable use by the illegal terrorist group the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant of a chemical warfare agent, mustard gas, that it has synthesized. We have repeatedly warned the world the potential for this existed, starting with the use of another chemical agent, sarin, against Syrian civilians and troops in April and August 2015 in Khan Al-Asal and eastern Ghouta, in the suburbs of Damascus. Since then, we have continued to draw the attention of the international community to such incidents. Our Western partners seem to have turned a blind eye to them, and if they have received any information on terrorists’ use of chemical weapons against Government troops and civilians, such facts have been quickly forgotten.

The proposed language of paragraphs 2 and 13 of draft resolution A/C.1/71/L.61/Rev.1, with reference to the March decisions of the OPCW Executive Council, distorts the real state of affairs. The situation is now quite different. The Syrian Government, in close coordination with the OPCW Technical Secretariat, has already presented additional information and officially informed the Executive Council that it has made substantial adjustments to its initial notification, a responsible step that fully satisfies some questions about the initial Syrian notification. It is unclear to us why the authors of the draft resolution refuse to reflect that undeniably positive development in their text. One might conclude that they do not welcome the Government of Syria’s success with its chemical demilitarization programme.

Considering that the anti-Syrian language proposed by the authors of draft resolution A/C.1/71/L.61/Rev.1 is a blatant distortion of reality, we cannot accept it. Russia will therefore vote against the third and fourth preambular paragraphs and operative paragraphs 2 and 13, and against the draft resolution as a whole.

The Chair: I now call on delegations wishing to explain their position before we take action on the draft resolution listed under cluster 2. Statements are limited to 10 minutes.

Mr. Chasnouski (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): The delegation of Belarus has requested the floor to clarify its position regarding draft resolution A/C.1/71/L.61/Rev.1, entitled “Implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction”.

The Republic of Belarus remains firmly and unwaveringly dedicated to the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention and supports the activities of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. In our opinion, that has always been the objective of the draft resolution, which is why we have traditionally voted in its favour. However, the transformation of the draft resolution we have seen in recent years has diverted it from its original purpose and therefore this year we will be unable to support it.

Mr. Hallak (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): I am taking the floor to explain Syria’s vote on draft resolution A/C.1/71/L.61/Rev.1, entitled “Implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction”.

My delegation, with other friendly delegations, has earnestly attempted to arrive at a balanced draft resolution that would enjoy consensus and reflect the positive situation regarding the complete elimination of Syria’s chemical-weapon programme. However, some delegations, the United States foremost among them, have continued to ignore everything that has been achieved to date, adopting clear double standards focusing on issues that have nothing to do with the substance of the draft resolution. They repeatedly claim that they are anxiously awaiting a Middle East free of nuclear weapons and all weapons of mass destruction, but all reports, studies and research indicate that Israel, which they protect, is the one and only regional entity possessing a nuclear arsenal as well as the largest chemical and biological arsenal in the Middle East.

Such reports have not been enough to persuade the United States and other countries to put genuine pressure on Israel to accede to the international treaties and conventions on weapons of mass destruction. The reports have referred unequivocally to Israel’s repeated use of biological and chemical weapons against the peoples of the region in Syria, Lebanon and Palestine from 1948 to the present day, the latest being the 2009 Goldstone report (A/HRC/12/48), which affirmed that

Israel used white phosphorus and depleted uranium against civilians in Gaza.

Yet none of those reports has convinced the United States and the other countries that are protecting Israel to call for an investigation of its violations, which threaten regional and international peace and security. The policy of focusing on and concocting unfounded claims against particular countries in the Middle East has become a game we are all familiar with. Those who claim to care about the safety and security of the peoples of the region must prove it by holding Israel accountable for its continued violations of international law and the Charter of the United Nations.

The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic is firmly committed to freeing the Middle East of all weapons of mass destruction, especially nuclear weapons, and to proving to the entire world that it rejects any use of chemical weapons and condemns the use of weapons of mass destruction, including chemical weapons, as unethical.

In the past, Syria has voted in favour of this resolution. In 2003, as a non-permanent member of the Security Council, we submitted a draft resolution to the Council with the goal of declaring the Middle East a region free of weapons of mass destruction and nuclear weapons in particular. Our efforts came up against a threat of a veto of the draft resolution by the United States.

The Syrian Arab Republic is party to and a full member of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). Like other members, we have participated in all its meetings and discussions. Since our accession to the OPCW, we have been eager to commit to all the obligations that members assume, as well as to the decisions of the Executive Council. We have implemented all the requirements ahead of schedule. We have cooperated constructively in every way with all teams affiliated with the OPCW and the United Nations, for which we have been repeatedly commended by both organizations and by international public opinion.

Concerning the references in the draft resolution to the reports of the OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism, we reiterate that the conclusions in those reports (see S/2016/738/Rev.1 and S/2016/888), which contain significant and critical structural gaps and have been comprehensively rejected by Syria. They are based on witness accounts provided

by armed terrorist groups and entities that support them. They provide no credible or scientific evidence to substantiate the claims that chlorine was used, whether by its presence in any of the samples collected or from the credible medical reports provided. Neither report shows that the deaths resulted from the inhalation of chlorine gas, and on the basis of such evidence there are no legal grounds for accusing the Syrian Government.

We have tried to reach a consensus on numerous issues, including this one. However, we have seen certain countries make significant efforts to politicize this draft resolution in a hysterical fashion, attempting to taint it as they have with other draft resolutions targeting specific countries. It focuses on Syria, but given our status as a full member of the OPCW and the United Nations, this is not an issue that should be addressed differently from other similar issues, and we should adopt a purely technical approach to it.

For all these reasons, my delegation will vote against the draft resolution and all of its paragraphs that refer to the Syrian Arab Republic. We call on countries to vote against it or at least to abstain in the voting, particularly on the paragraphs that will be put to separate, recorded votes.

Mr. Benítez Versón (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Cuban delegation would like to explain its vote on draft resolution A/C.1/71/L.61/Rev.1, entitled “Implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction”.

As a State party to the Chemical Weapons Convention, our country is fully committed to its principles and goals, complies with all its provisions and participates actively and constructively in the work of Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). We categorically reject the use of chemical weapons and call for the destruction of existing stocks as soon as possible.

For more than two decades, the resolutions of the General Assembly on the Chemical Weapons Convention have been adopted by consensus. However, in 2014 the text began to take a negative direction, and States’ united position on it fell apart. The situation is worse this year. Today we are taking action on a clearly unbalanced and politicized draft resolution that is not an adequate reflection of the work that has been carried out within the framework of the Chemical Weapons Convention over the past year.

The Cuban delegation made sincere efforts to restore the traditional balance in the draft resolution and enable its adoption by consensus. Regrettably, our proposed amendments were not duly taken into account. For those reasons, this year, for the first time since the draft resolution was originally introduced in the First Committee, Cuba will abstain in the voting rather than voting in its favour. Similarly, our delegation will abstain in the voting on the third and fourth preambular paragraphs and operative paragraph 13, and will vote against operative paragraph 2 if a separate vote is requested.

We cannot support the draft resolution’s dangerous and mistaken approach. The General Assembly is not the forum for recreating discussions whose rightful place is in the framework of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons in The Hague. Any pending technical questions about the Syrian issue must be resolved within the framework of the OPCW, without bias or politicization, in accordance with its established procedures.

The legitimate concerns that various delegations have expressed about the report of the OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigation Mechanism must be duly considered and discussed. The First Committee is not mandated to endorse or take action on the outcome of a report submitted to the Security Council that must be considered in the framework of the OPCW. The draft resolution has continued to ignore the Syrian Government’s cooperation, despite the complexity of the security situation. That cooperation enabled chemical weapons in Syria to be destroyed on schedule and enabled Syria to accede to the Chemical Weapons Convention as a State party. The text also disregards the cooperation of the Syrian authorities with the clarification processes of Syria’s national declaration, the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission and the Joint Investigative Mechanism.

We reiterate our call to the sponsors to reconsider the course of action pursued in recent years, as a result of which this important draft resolution has continued to move ever further from consensus. Confrontation and politicization cannot be allowed to prevail over the spirit of cooperation and unanimous support that the Chemical Weapons Convention needs. The First Committee is a forum where we should unite the entire international community in support of the Convention and promote its universalization.

Mr. Wood (United States of America): I have asked for the floor to speak on behalf of Albania, Australia, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Qatar, Romania, the Republic of Korea, Saudi Arabia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and my own country, the United States of America, to explain our vote on draft resolution on A/C.1/71/L.61/Rev.1, entitled “Implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction”, sponsored by Poland.

We all intend to vote in favour of the draft resolution, as we believe that it reflects the objectives and goals of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and the extraordinary work done by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism team and panel to determine who is responsible for using chemical weapons in Syria. Equally importantly, the draft resolution captures the gravity of the reality as well as the importance of holding those who use chemical weapons accountable. We deeply appreciate the dedication and professionalism of the members of the Joint Investigative Mechanism, the Director General and Technical Secretariat of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and the members of the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission in investigating chemical-weapon attacks in the Syrian Arab Republic.

We believe that there is no greater challenge to the CWC than a State party using chemical weapons, and the international community must be clear in responding to such use and condemning it, including by supporting efforts to hold those who use chemical weapons accountable. We now have two reports by the Joint Investigative Mechanism (see S/2016/738/Rev.1 and S/2016/888) confirming that the armed forces of the Syrian Arab Republic used chemical weapons on three separate occasions. The Syrian Arab Republic’s repeated use of such weapons and its failure to fully declare its chemical-weapon programme are violations of its international legal obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention and Security Council resolution 2118 (2013).

We condemn those violations of international law in the strongest possible terms, as we do the use of chemical weapons by the so-called Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), in flagrant disregard of well-established international standards and norms. The use of chemical weapons by a State or non-State actor is reprehensible, and we demand that the Syrian Arab Republic and the so-called Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant immediately desist from any further use of chemical weapons.

We fully support extending the Joint Investigative Mechanism to enable it to continue its work in investigating additional cases of confirmed or likely use determined by the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission — a crucial mechanism that continues to review allegations of use, including some as recently as August and September this year. To that end, we continue to express our strong support for the Joint Investigative Mechanism and the important work of the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission. We also support the efforts of the declaration assessment team to address the gaps and discrepancies in Syria’s chemical weapons declaration. It is our strong belief that any effort to deliberately ignore those serious issues undermines the work of the international community to date, detracts from the extraordinary efforts undertaken by the OPCW and the United Nations and calls into question the credibility of the CWC and the entire international legal framework.

The international community must squarely confront the reality before it and hold Syria and ISIL accountable for their use of chemical weapons. The preamble of the Chemical Weapons Convention makes it clear that we must be “[d]etermined for the sake of all mankind, to exclude completely the possibility of the use of chemical weapons”. The extraordinary situation in Syria is a test of that goal. Now, for the sake of all people everywhere, but especially the people of Syria, we must act to exclude completely the possibility of the continued use of chemical weapons, and to hold those who use such weapons accountable.

Finally, if any other delegations wish to associate themselves with this statement, we encourage and invite them to do so by taking the floor and placing their association on record.

Mr. Robotjazi (Islamic Republic of Iran): I am taking the floor to explain my delegation’s vote on draft resolution A/C.1/71/L.61/Rev.1.

The Islamic Republic of Iran, as the main victim of the use of chemical weapons in contemporary history, considers the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) crucially important. It is the embodiment of the international norm against chemical weapons. We were among the first countries to sign and ratify it, and we continue to strongly support the upholding of its authority and its full and non-discriminatory implementation. We strongly condemn the use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere, under any circumstances. The possibility of their use must be eliminated. That objective will not be fully realized as long as there remains even a single non-party to the Convention that could possess or acquire such weapons. We urge all those outside the CWC, in particular the Israeli regime, to accede to it without any further delay.

Based on that principled position, Iran attaches great importance to the resolution on the Chemical Weapons Convention. Its original goal was to promote the full implementation of the Convention and its universalization without politicizing the technical issues related to its implementation, and that was why it could be adopted without a vote for two decades. But the tradition of consensus collapsed last year as a result of the politicization of the draft resolution, reflecting the views of one group of countries on an extremely controversial issue and disregarding those of others. We invited the resolution's sponsor to reconsider its approach to drafting the text and keeping it unpoliticized. We also expressed our readiness to engage with the sponsor and other concerned delegations in order to find a balanced solution to the controversy.

Regrettably, our sincere recommendation and efforts have not been heeded in the drafting of the text this year. Draft resolution A/C.1/71/L.61/Rev.1 is highly politicized, significantly detracting from its original goal. It has adopted the confrontational approach of one group of countries to addressing the issue of Syria. It fails even to note the destruction of chemical weapons and the relevant production facilities in Syria, which was accomplished under difficult and hazardous conditions within a year of Syria's accession to the Convention.

Four paragraphs of the draft resolution are devoted to blaming Syria, while the Syrian Arab Republic's extensive cooperation with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) in expediting the withdrawal and destruction of its chemical weapons and chemical-weapon production facilities is completely

ignored, although it has prevented chemical weapons and other production facilities from falling into the hands of terrorist groups in Syria such as Da'esh and Al-Qaida.

In all of their reports to the Executive Council of the OPCW, the Director General of the OPCW and the various fact-finding missions and technical missions dispatched to Syria have acknowledged the Syrian Government's full cooperation with the work of the OPCW. Paragraph 2 of the draft resolution takes for granted the conclusions of the Joint Investigative Mechanism, which are based on speculations and assumptions that are not substantiated by credible technical evidence or established facts.

The Islamic Republic of Iran condemns the use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere and under any circumstances, but the condemnation of a State party to the Convention on the basis of unproven assumptions and unsubstantiated claims is not acceptable. My delegation is deeply dissatisfied with the politicization of draft resolution A/C.1/71/L.61/Rev.1, which is no longer a document that supports and promotes the Chemical Weapons Convention but has turned into a tool of blame used to put political pressure on Syria's Government, which is engaged in a tough war against terrorism. We will therefore vote against it.

Mr. Abbani (Algeria) (*spoke in Arabic*): My delegation would like to speak in explanation of vote before proceeding to the vote on draft resolution A/C.1/71/L.61/Rev.1, entitled "Implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction".

We would first like to express our total commitment to the principles and goals of this universal Convention. We make every effort to fully and effectively implement its provisions and to strengthen international and regional cooperation in the service of its goals. In that context, Algeria would like to recall that the scope of the Convention's implementation is not limited to prohibiting an entire category of weapons of mass destruction or destroying stockpiles so as to maintain international peace and security, but can go further by promoting the peaceful use of the chemical materials and technology that are necessary to all countries' economies, without discrimination. We must also enhance international cooperation in order to facilitate technology and chemical materials transfers, especially

to developing countries, as well as the exchange of scientific and technical information in that regard. Algeria has explicitly confirmed more than once that it totally rejects the use of chemical weapons by anyone for any reason. It is unacceptable and a flagrant violation of international law, and we firmly reject and condemn it.

We would have hoped to see a general draft resolution that stressed the implementation of the Convention and mentioned the positive elements characterizing its international implementation, in the light of the commitments and objectives agreed on at the 2013 Third Review Conference of the Convention, especially as we come one year closer to the realization of our intended objective, a world free of all chemical weapons. The draft resolution should have emphasized the universal nature of the Convention, to which most States are party, with very few exceptions; touched on the verification regime, which has yielded very positive results since the implementation of the Convention; and addressed international cooperation and the assistance system. All of those elements are very positive points of consensus that have led to and been central to the draft resolution's adoption in past years.

Today, however, we see that the draft resolution focuses on a specific case, which detracts from its natural and consensual balance, particularly since the specific case is the subject of ongoing discussion and debate in the Security Council and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. As we have said before, the politicization of several paragraphs of the draft resolution, the discussion of subjects that fall under the mandates of other United Nations bodies and the double standards assumed in enforcing commitments under the Convention are not helpful to the Convention, its objectives or some of its stakeholders. That is why we shall abstain in the voting on the paragraphs in question and urge the sponsors of the draft resolution to reconsider the aforementioned points in order to make next year's draft resolution more consensual, balanced and non-politicized, all while emphasizing the positive aspects of the implementation of the Convention.

The Chair: The Committee will now proceed to take action on draft resolution A/C.1/71/L.61/Rev.1, entitled "Implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction".

I give the floor to the Secretary of the Committee.

Ms. Elliott (Secretary of the Committee): Draft resolution A/C.1/71/L.61/Rev.1 was introduced by the representative of Poland at the 14th meeting of the Committee, on 18 October. The sponsor of the draft resolution is listed in document A/C.1/71/L.61/Rev.1.

The Chair: A recorded vote has been requested. Separate, recorded votes have been requested on the third and fourth preambular paragraphs and operative paragraphs 2 and 13. I shall put those paragraphs to the vote first, one by one, starting with the third preambular paragraph.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Afghanistan, Albania, Andorra, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Cabo Verde, Canada, Chad, Chile, Colombia, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Egypt, Estonia, Ethiopia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kuwait, Latvia, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Micronesia (Federated States of), Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Palau, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Romania, Rwanda, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sri Lanka, Swaziland, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Tuvalu, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Uruguay, Vanuatu, Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia

Against:

Belarus, Burundi, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Russian

Federation, Syrian Arab Republic, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Zimbabwe

Abstaining:

Algeria, Armenia, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Central African Republic, China, Cuba, Ecuador, El Salvador, Fiji, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Mali, Namibia, Nicaragua, Samoa, South Africa, Sudan, Tajikistan, United Republic of Tanzania

The third preambular paragraph was retained by 136 votes to 8, with 19 abstentions.

The Chair: The Committee will now take action on the fourth preambular paragraph.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Afghanistan, Albania, Andorra, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Cabo Verde, Canada, Chad, Chile, Colombia, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Egypt, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kuwait, Latvia, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Micronesia (Federated States of), Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nigeria, Norway, Pakistan, Palau, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Romania, Rwanda, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sri Lanka, Swaziland, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Tuvalu, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Uruguay, Vanuatu, Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia

Against:

Belarus, Burundi, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Russian Federation, Syrian Arab Republic, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Zimbabwe

Abstaining:

Algeria, Armenia, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Central African Republic, China, Cuba, Ecuador, El Salvador, Fiji, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Mali, Namibia, Nicaragua, South Africa, Sudan, Tajikistan, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania

The fourth preambular paragraph was retained by 133 votes to 8, with 20 abstentions.

The Chair: The Committee will now take action on operative paragraph 2.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Afghanistan, Albania, Andorra, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Bahamas, Bahrain, Barbados, Belgium, Belize, Bhutan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Cabo Verde, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Egypt, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, Indonesia, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kuwait, Latvia, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Micronesia (Federated States of), Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Palau, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Romania, Rwanda, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sri Lanka, Swaziland, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Tuvalu, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Uruguay, Vanuatu, Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia

Against:

Belarus, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Burundi, China, Cuba, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Nicaragua, Russian Federation, Syrian Arab Republic, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Zimbabwe

Abstaining:

Algeria, Armenia, Bangladesh, Benin, Central African Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Eritrea, Fiji, India, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Mali, Namibia, Nigeria, Pakistan, Samoa, South Africa, Sudan, Tajikistan, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania

Operative paragraph 2 was retained by 125 votes to 12, with 23 abstentions.

The Chair: The Committee will now take action on operative paragraph 13.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Afghanistan, Albania, Andorra, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Cabo Verde, Canada, Chad, Chile, Colombia, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Egypt, Estonia, Ethiopia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Iraq, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kuwait, Latvia, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Micronesia (Federated States of), Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Palau, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Romania, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sri Lanka, Swaziland, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Tuvalu, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland,

United States of America, Uruguay, Vanuatu, Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia

Against:

Belarus, Burundi, China, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Russian Federation, Syrian Arab Republic, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Zimbabwe

Abstaining:

Algeria, Armenia, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Central African Republic, Cuba, Ecuador, El Salvador, Eritrea, Fiji, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Mali, Namibia, Nicaragua, Pakistan, Rwanda, Samoa, South Africa, Sudan, Tajikistan, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania

Operative paragraph 13 was retained by 132 votes to 9, with 23 abstentions.

The Chair: The Committee will now take action on the draft resolution as a whole.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Cabo Verde, Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada, Central African Republic, Chad, Chile, Colombia, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, France, Gabon, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Micronesia (Federated States of), Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Palau, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Romania, Rwanda, San Marino, Saudi

Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sri Lanka, Swaziland, Sweden, Switzerland, Tajikistan, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Tuvalu, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Vanuatu, Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia

Against:

Burundi, China, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Kyrgyzstan, Russian Federation, Syrian Arab Republic

Abstaining:

Armenia, Belarus, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Cuba, Kenya, Mali, Namibia, Nicaragua, Samoa, South Africa, Sudan, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Zimbabwe

Draft resolution A/C.1/71/L.61/Rev.1, as a whole, was adopted by 149 votes to 6, with 15 abstentions.

The Chair: I shall now give the floor to those representatives who wish to speak in explanation of vote on the draft resolution just adopted.

Mr. Li Chunjie (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China consistently stands for the complete prohibition and destruction of all types of weapons of mass destruction, including chemical weapons. China supports the purpose and principles of the Chemical Weapons Convention. As an original contracting party to the Convention, China actively supports the work of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), fulfils its obligations under the Convention in good faith, and opposes the use of any chemical weapons by any parties for any purpose and in any circumstances.

With respect to draft resolution A/C.1/71/L.61/Rev.1, entitled “Implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction”, we believe that the text has the following defects.

First, the destruction of all types of chemical weapons is the core goal of the Convention and the top priority of the OPCW, and yet the destruction of abandoned Japanese chemical weapons has been repeatedly delayed. China is seriously concerned about that. Although we have raised the issue many times, the final draft resolution does not reflect it. We cannot accept that.

Secondly, the draft resolution contains paragraphs relating to Syrian chemical weapons, but it does not reflect all aspects of the issue in a balanced, comprehensive and objective way. As to the third and fourth reports of the OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism (see S/2016/738/Rev.1 and S/2016/888), no definitive conclusion has been reached by all the parties concerned. In that context, the inclusion of controversial content in the draft resolution is not conducive to the proper settlement of the Syrian chemical weapons issue. In the light of that, the Chinese delegation voted against the draft resolution.

Mr. Riquet (France) (*spoke in French*): I wish to explain France’s position on draft resolution A/C.1/71/L.61/Rev.1, entitled “Implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction”.

France aligns itself with the explanation of vote delivered by the representative of the United States. I would like to add some additional comments in my national capacity.

France would first like to thank the delegation of Poland for its efforts in negotiating the draft resolution, which has become increasingly difficult each year. We especially welcome the efforts to build international consensus on the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention. France wishes to underline the commitment of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism. That independent and impartial mechanism, composed of qualified experts, was established by unanimous vote of the Security Council, and its experts have worked on the basis of solid information.

The conclusions presented by the Joint Investigative Mechanism constitute an invaluable resource for guiding the international community’s response to repeated violations of the international non-proliferation regime and international law in the Syrian conflict. In that context, France welcomes and supports Security Council resolution 2314 (2016), adopted unanimously on 31 October to extend the mandate of the Joint Investigative Mechanism until 18 November.

The latest report of the Joint Investigative Mechanism (see S/2016/888) leaves no room for doubt. We now know that the Syrian army and Da’esh did not hesitate to resort to the use of chemical weapons

against civilians in Syria in at least four instances. Beyond the overwhelming nature of such conclusions, this represents a serious and unacceptable violation of the international non-proliferation regime and our collective security architecture. In the face of such conclusions, the international community cannot accept the violations of the universal norm prohibiting the use of chemical weapons without running the risk of trivializing such acts. In that regard, it is up to each individual to assume his or her responsibilities and draw the lessons of the conclusions of the Joint Investigative Mechanism's reports, with the particular goal of putting an end to the use of chemical weapons and ensuring that such crimes do not go unpunished.

I should also recall that those various aspects are compounded by the remaining uncertainties surrounding the declaration of the Syrian Government to the OPCW concerning its chemical programme. The potential existence of residual capacities on Syrian territory can only increase the risk of proliferation of such weapons, which is clearly a major concern.

Mr. Mahfouz (Egypt): Egypt participated wholeheartedly in the negotiations on the Chemical Weapons Convention and has always strongly supported its aims. In that context, today we voted in favour of draft resolution A/C.1/71/L.61/Rev.1, despite our difficulties with the language and wording of some of its preambular and operative paragraphs.

The lack of progress towards the establishment in the Middle East of a zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction leaves Egypt no choice but to insist on linking accession to the Convention to universalizing the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons in the Middle East, where there remains only one State, Israel, that is not party to any — I repeat, any — of the three multilateral treaties on weapons of mass destruction. Additionally, in 2013 Egypt invited States of the region that had not signed or ratified any of the multilateral instruments on weapons of mass destruction to commit to becoming parties to the instruments and to deposit letters to that effect with the Security Council in order for the Secretary-General to arrange for accession by all States of the region to occur simultaneously. According to the note by the Secretary-General contained in document A/68/781, all States of the region except one answered the call.

Egypt reiterates, once again, its call to free the Middle East from all weapons of mass destruction — nuclear, chemical and biological.

Ms. Gambhir (India): I wish to explain India's vote on draft resolution A/C.1/71/L.61/Rev.1, entitled "Implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction".

India voted in favour of the draft resolution, given the importance we attach to the Chemical Weapons Convention as a non-discriminatory instrument aimed at achieving the total elimination of a specific type of weapon of mass destruction. We regret the fact that, for the second year, consensus has not been possible on the draft resolution. It has been our consistent position that the use of chemical weapons anywhere, at any time, by anybody, under any circumstances, cannot be justified and that perpetrators of such abhorrent acts must be held accountable.

My delegation is deeply concerned about reports of accusations of terrorist groups' use of chemical weapons and their delivery systems and their continued use of chemical weapons and toxic chemicals in Syria and Iraq. We believe that the international community must take urgent measures and decisive action to prevent the possibility of any such future use. While we voted in favour of the fourth preambular paragraph and operative paragraph 13, we abstained in the voting on operative paragraph 2, since the third report of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism (see S/2016/738/Rev.1) is being considered by the Security Council, which mandated the Mechanism in 2015.

Mr. Luque Márquez (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): Ecuador is a staunch advocate of the universalization of the Chemical Weapons Convention and the full implementation of its provisions. I note that my country signed the Convention on 14 January 1993, the day after it was opened for signature. My country has never possessed chemical weapons and has always condemned their use by anyone, anywhere, as emphatically affirmed in operative paragraph 1 of the draft resolution we have just voted on. As such, Ecuador decided to vote in favour of A/C.1/71/L.61/Rev.1, as a whole, entitled "Implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction",

as a sign of our ongoing support and commitment to that instrument.

Nevertheless, my delegation abstained in the voting on several paragraphs of the draft resolution, as they incorporate elements that unduly politicize its content and might interfere with procedures that must follow the framework set up in the Convention and in bodies established through the Convention. Moreover, we are concerned that the inclusion of those contentious paragraphs — which contain subjective terms and come to and impose prejudicial conclusions — seeks to convert the draft resolution and the Chemical Weapons Convention itself into a pretext to justify actions that are contrary to international law and the Charter of the United Nations, including the principles of respect for sovereignty and non-intervention in the internal affairs of States.

The submission of a draft resolution on the Chemical Weapons Convention — a universal instrument — that includes paragraphs that are not universally accepted weakens the Convention rather than strengthening it. We therefore urge its sponsors to reconsider the position the draft is based on and to revert to seeking genuine consensus for next year's text.

Mr. Toro-Carnevali (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): As a party to the Chemical Weapons Convention, my country emphatically condemns the use of chemical weapons anywhere, by anyone and in any circumstances. We voted against the third and fourth preambular paragraphs and operative paragraphs 2 and 13 of draft resolution A/C.1/71/L.61/Rev.1, and we abstained in the voting on the draft resolution as a whole, because we believe that its universal spirit and purpose have been politicized. The sponsors have taken on the role of judges in the context of a specific international case, a position that is not in keeping with the work and mandate of this Committee. We hope that the draft resolution will soon regain the universal and consensual nature it has enjoyed for more than 20 years.

Mr. Adejola (Nigeria): My delegation abstained in the voting on operative paragraph 2 of draft resolution A/C.1/71/L.61/Rev.1.

Nigeria, needless to say, condemns the stockpiling or use of chemical or biological weapons under any guise, and will remain committed to the Chemical Weapons Convention. However, our concern is that the draft resolution does not clearly spell out what was

alleged to have been used in the case of the Syrian armed forces. At the seventieth session, Nigeria voted in favour of the same text as a whole, but abstained in the voting regarding a related paragraph that specifically condemned Syria as being responsible for the use of chemical weapons. The same text submitted during this session has also made reference to the Syrian Arab Republic in some of its operative paragraphs, but the one we abstained on was operative paragraph 2, which identifies the Syrian armed forces as responsible for what it calls toxic substances, without being specific.

Moreover, we are weary of accepting accusations that have not been fully substantiated, particularly against the armed forces of a sovereign nation, and especially when those allegations are juxtaposed with those of brutal and known terrorist organizations such as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, or any of its affiliates worldwide. That is why Nigeria abstained in the voting on operative paragraph 2 but voted in favour of the draft resolution as a whole.

Mr. Ngundze (South Africa): I am taking the floor to explain South Africa's vote on draft resolution A/C.1/71/L.61/Rev.1.

South Africa has always attached the highest priority to the Chemical Weapons Convention and the efforts of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) to achieve a world free of chemical weapons. My delegation has therefore consistently voted in favour of this draft resolution. We deeply regret the very late decision of this year's drafters to prematurely include criticism regarding the latest report (see S/2016/888) of the OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism, which has been submitted to and is being considered by the Security Council. The General Assembly is not the appropriate body for making any determination regarding the outcome of the work of the Mechanism, which falls specifically under the mandate of the Security Council. For that reason, my delegation decided to abstain in the voting on the draft resolution.

South Africa utterly deplores the use of chemical weapons in Syria and calls on all the parties involved to resolve the conflict in a peaceful manner. There is no cause that could justify the use of weapons of mass destruction by any actor under any circumstances. South Africa's opposition to chemical weapons and, indeed, any weapon of mass destruction, is implacable and will remain so.

Ms. Mac Loughlin (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): Argentina voted in favour of draft resolution A/C.1/71/L.61/Rev.1 and all of its paragraphs. We wish to reiterate our firm and long-standing commitment to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction. In that connection, we associate ourselves with the statement delivered by the representative of the Union of South American Nations on 17 October (see A/C.1/71/PV.13) and reaffirm our emphatic condemnation of the use of chemical weapons or any other weapon of mass destruction by anyone, at any time, under any circumstances. We are deeply concerned about the conclusions of the reports (see S/2016/738/Rev.1 and S/2016/888) of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism, as reflected in paragraph 2 of the draft resolution.

As we mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of the signature of the Joint Declaration on the Complete Prohibition of Chemical and Biological Weapons, Argentina expresses its firm commitment to advancing efforts to permanently relegate chemical weapons to the annals of history.

Mr. Ammar (Pakistan): My delegation has asked for the floor to explain its position on draft resolution A/C.1/71/L.61/Rev.1, entitled “Implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction”.

Pakistan strongly condemns the use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere. We fully support the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction and remain committed to its objectives and purposes. The Convention represents a success story of multilateralism and disarmament. It has made a seminal contribution to the advancement of international peace and security. It is therefore unfortunate that the long-standing consensus on this important resolution has broken down and could not be revived this year.

The Chemical Weapons Convention covers a range of issues, and we would have liked to see an adequate balance in the text of the draft resolution. Many delegations have expressed their concern about that lack of balance. Holding extensive negotiations in order to reach an agreement on this text used to be an

unwritten rule and standing practice in the informal work of the First Committee. Unfortunately, that has also broken down and does not augur well for the work of the Committee. Although we voted in favour of the draft resolution, in line with our consistent support for it, we wish to register our concern about the failure to bridge some of the gaps that remain. It was those gaps that forced us to abstain on operative paragraphs 2 and 13. We urge the sponsors to make every effort in the future to revive the spirit of consensus on the resolution by taking into account the need for balance and conciseness.

Mr. Ahmed (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): I have asked for the floor to deliver an explanation of Sudan’s abstention in the voting on draft resolution A/C.1/71/L.61/Rev.1.

The Sudan is an active member of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. We are very involved and committed to all of its purposes and principles. The Sudan neither produces, uses nor stockpiles such weapons, and we absolutely condemn their use for any reason, under any circumstances. The Sudan has changed its vote this year owing to the explicit, overt politicization of certain paragraphs of the draft resolution, which has made the resolution less professional and more judgemental.

We hope that in the future the draft resolution will focus on the purposes and principles for which the Organization was created, move away from politicization and resist any attempts to score political points.

Ms. Rahamimoff-Honig (Israel): We fully align ourselves with the statement made by the representative of the United States on behalf of 35 States, including Israel, and will now make a few comments in our national capacity.

The findings of the reports of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism for August and October (see S/2016/738/Rev.1 and S/2016/888) show a persistent and worrying pattern of use of chemical weapons by the Syrian regime. Those are not isolated and unauthorized incidents but examples of a premeditated modus operandi on the part of the regime against its own population. The latest report of the Mechanism even includes specific findings as to the Syrian army units involved in those heinous crimes. Furthermore, the gaps, inconsistencies and discrepancies identified

by the Technical Secretariat of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) regarding Syria's declarations give rise to growing concerns about its residual chemical capabilities, including research and development, which would enable Syria to rehabilitate its chemical-weapon programme.

Israel voted in favour of draft resolution A/C.1/71/L.61/Rev.1 in the light of our long-standing support for the annual resolution and the goals and purposes of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction, which we signed in 1993. Israel maintains a close dialogue with the OPCW and is a party to the Protocol for the Prohibition of the Use in War of Asphyxiating, Poisonous or Other Gases, and of Bacteriological Methods of Warfare.

Mr. Jiménez (Nicaragua) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegations wishes to take the floor to explain its vote on A/C.1/71/L.61/Rev.1.

Nicaragua, as a State party to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction, will never possess chemical weapons and condemns their use or threat of use by any country, including their possession and use by non-State actors or terrorist groups. Nevertheless, we abstained in the voting on three of its paragraphs, voted against operative paragraph 2 and abstained in the voting on the draft resolution as a whole, owing to the fact that the draft resolution has been politicized once again. The manipulation of the draft resolution to condemn a Member State of the Organization, without acknowledging the cooperation of the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic in difficult situations, regrettably forces us to make this decision once again. We have changed our vote from last year, when we voted in favour, to abstention, since the draft resolution is entirely unbalanced.

It is also regrettable that neither our proposal for an amendment, nor the concern of all parties to produce a consensus text, has been taken into account. That is why we call on the sponsors of the draft resolution to restore the former language, as that can only be of benefit to the Convention and the entire international community.

The Chair: The Committee will now turn to cluster 4, "Conventional weapons".

I shall first give the floor to delegations wishing to make general statements or to introduce the draft resolution under cluster 4, "Conventional weapons". Delegations are reminded that general statements are limited to five minutes.

Mr. Noori (Afghanistan): My delegation is also speaking on behalf of two of the other main sponsors of draft resolution A/C.1/71/L.68/Rev.1, Australia and France.

We are seriously concerned about the devastation caused by the increasing use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) globally by illegal armed groups, terrorists and other unauthorized recipients. In that context, the delegation of Afghanistan first introduced General Assembly resolution 70/46, addressing the issue of IEDs, last year and was pleased that it was adopted by consensus. We thank the Secretary-General for his report (A/71/187) pursuant to last year's resolution. Several elements of the report are reflected in this year's draft resolution.

This year, based on the decision on last year's resolution, my delegation shared a draft resolution with the States Members of the United Nations and held an informal consultation session. We also earnestly pursued bilateral meetings with some delegations to ensure that consensus could be maintained on the resolution. As a result, it is my pleasure to introduce draft resolution A/C.1/71/L.68/Rev.1, entitled "Countering the threat posed by improvised explosive devices" under agenda item 98, "General and complete disarmament". It is to be hoped that draft resolution A/C.1/71/L.68/Rev.1 can be adopted by consensus by the First Committee and in plenary.

In conclusion, my delegation thanks all delegations that have been actively engaged in further enriching the draft resolution and have played very constructive roles, as well as those that showed flexibility in keeping the consensus. Finally, we also thank all the draft resolution's sponsors.

Mr. Ammar (Pakistan): I have asked for the floor to make a general statement on draft resolution A/C.1/71/L.68/Rev.1, entitled "Countering the threat posed by improvised explosive devices".

We fully share the concerns about the indiscriminate effects arising from the use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs), including by illegal armed groups, terrorists and other unauthorized recipients. We

recognize the efforts of the sponsors to highlight this issue by bringing the draft resolution to the First Committee. Pakistan continues to believe that several issues that the draft resolution seeks to address can best be addressed through existing frameworks. In our view, the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW), in particular its Amended Protocol II, provides the most appropriate forum for considering and addressing the issue of IEDs in a holistic manner. The strength of the CCW lies in its legal framework. The CCW forum has the right expertise and technical focus to deal with the issue as effectively as possible. It also provides parties with international assistance and cooperation, which are central to any meaningful effort to address challenges associated with IEDs.

It is important to take measures to prevent illegal armed groups and terrorists from gaining access to explosives and other materials and components that can be used to manufacture and use IEDs. Cooperation between and among States has a significant role in that regard. However, taking into account the wide spectrum of materials that can be used for manufacturing and using of IEDs, most of which have numerous peaceful civilian applications, it is crucial that national measures not restrict or limit access to those materials for trade, development, research or other peaceful purposes.

Numerous Pakistani civilians and security personnel have suffered from the use of IEDs. Pakistan has taken a number of significant steps to counter this menace. In addition to a national counter-IED strategy, Pakistan has established a Pakistan Army counter-IED organization to provide a proactive counter-IED response and a counter-IED explosives and munition school, providing state-of-the-art counter-IED training. We also offer training opportunities to our international partners.

Through concerted law-enforcement action, Pakistan has eliminated the use of IEDs by terrorists to a large degree. We have successfully implemented stringent regulatory measures to control precursor materials usable in IEDs, along with tightening our border controls. Despite limited resources, Pakistan's law-enforcement agencies have significantly improved their capacity and capability to detect and neutralize IEDs, and we stand ready and willing to further contribute to combating the global threat they pose.

The Chair: I now call on delegations wishing to explain their vote or position on the draft resolution listed under cluster 4.

Mr. Mahfouz (Egypt): I am taking the floor to explain Egypt's position on draft resolution A/C.1/71/L.68/Rev.1, entitled "Countering the threat posed by improvised explosive devices".

My delegation will join the consensus on the draft resolution as we did last year, when it was introduced for the first time, under the leadership of Afghanistan. We fully share the concerns about the threats posed by improvised explosive devices (IEDs), which are being increasingly used by terrorists against civilians and State law enforcement personnel in order to sow terror and which result in unacceptable loss of life. However, I would like to highlight my delegation's views on the eighth preambular paragraph.

Egypt strongly opposes the inclusion of elements beyond the context of the objective of the draft resolution, which is countering the threats posed by IEDs. Drawing artificial and misleading links to irrelevant elements sends the wrong message, by providing an excuse or justification for terrorists' use of IEDs. In our opinion, that may be construed as blatant disregard for the lives lost and suffering endured by thousands of victims of IEDs. It further clearly contradicts all other relevant General Assembly resolutions, in particular resolution 70/291 on the Global United Nations Counter-Terrorism Strategy Review. That resolution emphasized the fundamental principle that no conditions can justify acts of terrorism. We find it unacceptable that the draft resolution was manipulated for political objectives at a time when thousands of victims are claimed as a direct result of the use of IEDs in a number of countries, including Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria, as well as other States around the world.

In view of the mistaken message that the eighth preambular paragraph conveys, Egypt, which has lost countless innocent civilians and security personnel as a direct result of the use of IEDs by terrorists, calls on the main sponsors of the draft resolution to reconsider their position on that message if they really care about ensuring that the resolution can be adopted by consensus next year.

Mr. Robotjazi (Islamic Republic of Iran): Iran firmly supports measures to counter the threat posed by the use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) by illegal armed groups and terrorists. For that reason, my

delegation will join the consensus on draft resolution A/C.1/71/L.68/Rev.1. We believe that preventing and combating the use of IEDs by such groups is the draft resolution's only purpose, and that any interpretation of its provisions should be consistent with that purpose. Since it is almost impossible to define the scope of the items that can be used to manufacture IEDs, and because many of them have civilian applications, any interpretation, beyond the draft resolution's exclusive purpose, that could lead to restricting free access to and trade in such equipment and goods for civilian use is unacceptable.

Mr. Hallak (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): My country will join the consensus on draft resolution A/C.1/71/L.68/Rev.1, "Countering the threat posed by improvised explosive devices". As we are all aware, my country, like others, is one of the victims of the use of such devices by armed terrorist groups supported by countries that are known to everyone here. We have some reservations about the draft resolution, however, since two of its co-authors, France and the United Kingdom, are among those that provide armed terrorist groups in Syria with weapons and munitions.

The Chair: The Committee will now take action on draft resolution A/C.1/71/L.68/Rev.1, entitled "Countering the threat posed by improvised explosive devices", under cluster 4, "Conventional weapons".

I give the floor to the Secretary of the Committee.

Ms. Elliott (Secretary of the Committee): Draft resolution A/C.1/71/L.68/Rev.1 was just introduced by the representative of Afghanistan. The sponsors of the draft resolution are named in document A/C.1/71/L.68/Rev.1. In addition, the following oral statement is made in accordance with rule 153 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly.

Under the terms of paragraph 22 of draft resolution A/C.1/71/L.68/Rev.1, the General Assembly would request the Secretary-General to prepare a report on the implementation of the present resolution, acknowledging and taking into account existing efforts already being undertaken, and seeking the views of Member States for consideration by the Assembly at its seventy-third session. Pursuant to the request contained in paragraph 22, the request for documentation would constitute an addition to the documentation workload for the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management of one biennial pre-session document of 8,500 words, to be issued in all six official

languages, beginning in 2018. That would entail additional resource requirements in the amount of \$37,600 for documentation services, beginning in 2018. Accordingly, should the General Assembly adopt draft resolution A/C.1/71/L.68/Rev.1, the additional resource requirements of \$37,600 that would arise beginning in 2018 under section 2, General Assembly and Economic and Social Council affairs and conference management, will be included in the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2018-2019.

I would now like to draw delegations' attention to the additional sponsors of draft resolution A/C.1/71/L.68/Rev.1, listed on the e-Delegate portal of the First Committee. The additional sponsors of draft resolution A/C.1/71/L.68/Rev.1 are Albania, Greece, India, the Niger, Turkey and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

The Chair: The sponsors of draft resolution A/C.1/71/L.68/Rev.1 have expressed the wish that it be adopted by the Committee without a vote. If I hear no objection, I shall take it that the Committee wishes to act accordingly.

Draft resolution A/C.1/71/L.68/Rev.1 was adopted.

The Chair: I now call on those delegations wishing to speak in explanation of position on the draft resolution just adopted.

Ms. Keane (Ireland): I would like to deliver the following statement on behalf of Ireland and New Zealand.

The humanitarian harm caused by the growing use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) is a matter of grave concern to Ireland and New Zealand. IEDs and their proliferation represent a significant threat to our global efforts to promote and maintain stability, security, sustainable development, human rights and humanitarian operations. The recent report of the Secretary-General (A/71/187) on the subject highlighted the importance of united efforts and coordinated action in tackling this complex phenomenon. For that reason, Ireland and New Zealand have joined the consensus on draft resolution A/C.1/71/L.68/Rev.1, entitled "Countering the threat posed by improvised explosive devices".

However, we have consistently expressed the view that the key issue of concern with regard to IEDs is their indiscriminate effects. Those effects are not limited to any particular user. In our view, an approach whereby

emphasis is placed on one or more categories of user, rather than the actual weapon, does not accurately address the problem. We regret that the suggestion we shared with the sponsors of the draft resolution, on including a reference for the need for measures to prevent or minimize the indiscriminate effects of IEDs, irrespective of their users, was not reflected in the text. Furthermore, while we acknowledge that the use of IEDs is particularly problematic and frequent when made in the context of terrorist attacks, we nevertheless believe that a heavy emphasis on a particular type of user, such as non-State actors or terrorists, risks departing from fundamental concepts and principles of international humanitarian law. In that regard, Ireland and New Zealand deeply regret that earlier references to the need for counter-terrorism measures to comply with international law, including international humanitarian law, have not been included in the draft resolution as now submitted.

We look forward to continuing the discussion, including at the upcoming Review Conference of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, on how we can continue our common efforts to address the issue of improvised explosive devices in a comprehensive and balanced manner, taking into account all parameters of that multifaceted phenomenon and reflecting the principles of international humanitarian law.

Mr. Benítez Verson (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Cuban delegation supported draft resolution A/C.1/71/L.68/Rev.1, entitled “Countering the threat posed by improvised explosive devices”, because we consider the general balance of the text to be appropriate and positive. For us, it is very important that the scope of the draft resolution be clearly limited to the use of such devices by terrorists, illegal armed groups and other unauthorized recipients, and that it reaffirm the inherent right of States to legitimate self-defence under Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations. That approach is what makes the draft resolution acceptable to all Member States and adoptable by consensus.

Our support for the draft resolution as a whole does not necessarily mean that we agree with all of its content. Regarding the fourth preambular paragraph, although we agree with the importance of addressing attacks using improvised explosive devices, we do not believe that it would be a decisive factor in the implementation of the targets and goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Achieving those

targets and goals requires addressing deep-rooted causes that affect sustainable development.

In the context of paragraph 1, we would like to recall that in the discussions on General Assembly resolution 70/46, adopted last year, the Cuban delegation stressed at the time that it was premature for the first report of the Secretary-General on improvised explosive devices (A/71/187) to include recommendations that, being of an anticipatory nature, would not properly take into account the opinions of Member States. Regrettably, our concern was not heeded last year and the recommendations contained in the report introduced this year by the Secretary-General show that our concerns were not unfounded. As a result, while Cuba supports the draft resolution as a whole, that does not mean that our country endorses or accepts the Secretary-General’s report in its totality and its recommendations.

Furthermore, we are concerned by the large number of initiatives with respect to improvised explosive devices that are proposed in paragraphs 18, 19 and 20. In our opinion, many of those initiatives could duplicate the efforts already under way, bearing in mind that this topic is already broadly reviewed within the framework of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons. Instead of creating new structures and reports, which would create a demand for greater human resources and financial contributions from States, we believe that it would have been more appropriate to try to address the existing forums as efficiently as possible. The Cuban delegation will continue to work constructively at the next session as a sponsor of that important draft resolution.

The Chair: The Committee has thus concluded action on all draft resolutions and decisions submitted under the agenda items allocated to it.

I shall now call on those delegations that have requested to speak in exercise of the right of reply. I remind all delegations that the first intervention in right of reply is limited to 10 minutes and the second to five.

Ms. Rahamimoff-Honig (Israel): I am taking the floor to exercise my delegation’s right of reply to the statement and unfounded allegations made by the representative of Syria in connection with draft resolution A/C.1/71/L.61/Rev.1.

One has only to look at that country’s very poor track record, especially as it pertains to the

proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and adherence to international legal obligations it has undertaken, to comprehend how seriously one should take that statement. Repeating untruths, distortions and fabrications over and over again in the First Committee does not make them true.

Mr. Hallak (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, the Syrian delegation would like to thank delegations that have voted against paragraphs targeting my country and against the draft resolutions containing them. We also thank delegations that have abstained in the voting on such paragraphs and draft resolutions as a whole. We are grateful to them for not allowing a resolution that we have adopted by consensus to be politicized.

I say to all those who have tried through various statements today to raise their profile on the Committee that they have been exposed. We all know that they are directly or indirectly involved in transferring chemical materials into Syria, and into the hands of terrorist groups, via Syria's neighbours. With regard to the statement made earlier by the French delegation, I would like to point out that in the book *Les chemins de Damas*, two French writers have revealed the involvement of a former Minister for Foreign Affairs of France, Laurent Fabius, in a 2012 attack in which terrorists used chemical weapons.

We all know that Israel is involved and cooperating with armed terrorist groups in Syria. Moreover, not content with transferring arms and munitions to such groups, it is now sending chemical materials. We have already alerted the Security Council to the recent arrival on Syrian territory of containers from Israel containing such materials. Israel should refrain from all such vain attempts and stop transferring chemical materials to terrorist groups for eventual use against civilians and soldiers of the Syrian army. That is the first thing. The second is that Israel has been cooperating with groups that are designated as terrorists on the Security Council's list. All of that must end.

Mr. Wood (United States of America): I am taking the floor to exercise my right of reply to the comments made earlier about my country by the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Today we have once again seen that the Syrian regime continues to deny its role in carrying out chemical-weapon attacks on its own people. The regime and its supporters claim that the reports of the United

Nations-Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons Joint Investigative Mechanism are based on unsubstantiated allegations and innuendo, and maintain that they have been politicized. I submit that it is those who make such claims who are politicizing the reports, by ignoring the gravity of what the regime has done to its own people through chemical-weapon attacks.

There is no greater threat to the Chemical Weapons Convention than violations committed by States that are party to it. For the sake of future generations, therefore, the international community must hold those who use such heinous weapons accountable for their actions.

Mr. Hallak (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): First, since the representative of the United States Government has mentioned my country, we would like to tell him that the real danger lies in the implications of a country like the United States of America cooperating with armed terrorist groups, particularly those that are designated as such on the Security Council's lists. Secondly, proper attention must be paid to the American writer Seymour Hersh, who has spoken about the United States Government's involvement in the transfer of chemical materials to Syria that were later used against the Syrian people and some members of its armed forces. Thirdly, we have asked before what the two United States experts cooperating with the Al-Nusra Front and other terrorist groups, such as Jund Al-Aqsa, were doing in Syria. If the United States does not want to answer that, we can tell them. They were helping them to implement the mix of chemical materials in the groups' possession.

Mr. Wood (United States of America): Very briefly, I would like to say that the charges made just now by the representative of Syria are absolutely ridiculous. The Syrian regime should stop trying to divert the rest of the world's attention from the crimes it has committed against its own people. The international community must ensure that those who commit such heinous acts are held accountable.

Programme of work

The Chair: Our last order of business is to adopt the draft provisional programme of work and timetable of the First Committee for 2017, as contained in document A/C.1/71/CRP.5, which has been distributed to all delegations. I encourage everyone to really look at and study it.

The draft programme of work for 2017 is based on the practices of the Committee in previous years, with the total number of meetings identical to the number allocated to the Committee for the session. That comprises one organizational meeting, seven meetings for the general debate, twelve for the thematic discussion segment and six meetings for the action phase.

I would like to remind all delegations that the First Committee shares its conference facilities and other resources with the Fourth Committee. Consequently, the draft provisional programme of the First Committee for 2017, which we are considering now, has been prepared in consultation with the Secretariat of the Fourth Committee. The two Committees will continue to coordinate their work and maintain a sequential pattern of conducting their meetings, in order to maximize shared resources.

The provisional programme of work under consideration will, of course, be finalized and issued in its final form before the First Committee starts its substantive work at its next session.

May I take it that the Committee wishes to adopt the draft provisional programme of work and timetable of the First Committee for 2017, as contained in document A/C.1/71/CRP.5?

It was so decided.

The Chair: The Committee has now concluded its consideration of the last item on the agenda for today.

This year the Committee finished its work in four weeks and three days, one day ahead of the recommended date of 3 November. I am happy to note in that regard that we have again managed to preserve one of the Committee's best practices, of not using the last meeting scheduled to be used "if necessary". For that I commend and thank all delegations for their cooperation.

During our session, 118 delegations made statements within the general-debate segment, with an impressive 302 statements delivered during the thematic-discussion segment. During the action phase, the Committee adopted 69 draft resolutions and decisions, 35 of them adopted by a recorded vote, with 30 separate votes requested. Thirty-four draft proposals were adopted without a vote, accounting for approximately 49 per cent of all the action taken, compared to last year's figure of 50 per cent.

The Committee introduced several measures during this session designed to facilitate our work. I am encouraged by the overwhelmingly positive feedback that the Bureau and I have received from delegations concerning the e-speaker and e-sponsorship tools. We realize that there may have been some initial apprehensiveness and even some questions, but I think they are now a part of our working methods and, I hope, will continue to be so in future. We will certainly convey to the next Bureau the lessons we have learned in using the e-tools. I would also like to acknowledge delegations' efforts to deliver their various statements, explanations of vote and rights of reply — not always, but mostly — within the time limits set by the Assembly and in accordance with its rules of procedure. We would not have been able to finish our work on time without that cooperation.

I would now like to welcome the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Kim Won-soo, and to invite him to address the Committee.

Statement by the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs

Mr. Kim Won-soo (High Representative for Disarmament Affairs): I came down here today to thank everyone personally. As the Chair just said, everyone is to be congratulated on completing the First Committee's work so productively. I note that the number of draft resolutions and decisions debated and adopted has gone up from 58 last year and 63 the year before that, to 69 this year. The work has been extraordinary both in terms of its intensity and the level of Member States' engagement. We also witnessed record numbers of statements made in the general debate and thematic discussions, as well as in the number of rights of reply exercised during the session. The Committee's leadership in taking the lead with PaperSmart and the e-ways of conducting its meetings has been particularly noted and welcomed. I hope that other Committees and the General Assembly will emulate that leadership.

I also firmly believe that the Committee's work this year will give fresh impetus to multilateral disarmament in years to come. I would particularly like to thank the Committee for two things — first, its swift response to our appeal for payment of outstanding dues to disarmament treaties, especially the forthcoming fifteenth meeting of the States parties to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention. That quick action has ensured that an important meeting can now

proceed. I believe the Committee set a United Nations record for speed and scope of action. I have never seen such a swift follow-up in the action that all Member States took to make the meeting possible. We hope to see that same spirit exemplified in support for the problems of other treaty bodies, too.

Secondly, I would like to thank the Committee for its support to the celebration of the thirtieth anniversary of the United Nations Regional Centres for Peace and Disarmament, as well as for the consistent support it has shown them over the past three decades. We also welcome the commitments, old and new, of Member States to continuing to fund the Regional Centres' efforts to address the growing challenges that every region of the world is facing.

Before concluding, I would be remiss in not expressing my gratitude to you, Mr. Chair, for your dynamic leadership and skilful stewardship of the Committee. Despite the numerous competing views in this room, you have managed to build bridges and goodwill. Many of us, including me, were worried that the Committee could face a perfect storm, but you have been masterful in steering it out of that storm, and I must thank you and the Bureau for your leadership. I think it should be us giving you a present rather than the other way around, but I do want to convey our heartfelt thanks.

I would also like to thank the members of the Bureau for their valuable advice and support to the Chair, and to thank the Secretariat for its excellent work in supporting the meetings and delegations. Finally, I would like to express my appreciation to every delegation for showing flexibility and a willingness to seek compromises in the work of the Committee. I hope that the same spirit will continue into next year's meetings, including those of the United Nations Disarmament Commission and the Preparatory Committee of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

The Chair: I thank the High Representative for his statement and his warm words.

I shall now call on those delegations wishing to make final statements.

Mr. Isnomo (Indonesia): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (NAM) in presenting our concluding remarks.

First, the Movement would like to congratulate you, Mr. Chair, on the Committee's completion of its work, and to thank you and the members of the Bureau for your leadership during this session. NAM would also like to thank the Secretariat of the Committee for its work in organizing our meetings and documentation and assisting delegations and representatives. The Movement notes that you were able to build on previous efforts to improve time management and discipline in the First Committee. We recognize that significant progress has been made in applying information technology — the use of e-sponsorship and e-inscription — to the work of the Committee, which has managed to improve the efficiency of the way we do business in the Committee. It was high time that we did so. We therefore urge that such practices be continued in future sessions.

Nonetheless, we note that there is still room for improvement in several areas, such as reviewing the working methods of the meetings and respecting the rules of procedure so as to make our work more efficient. Some areas we could focus on include the speaking times allotted to delegations, and ways to make panel discussions more interactive and participatory. The First Committee's methods of work were most recently decided on in 1994, through General Assembly resolution 49/85, a little more than 20 years ago, at a time when those methods suited the prevailing circumstances and when fewer delegations actively participated in the Committee's work. Much has changed and progressed since then with the advent of modern information technology and new dynamics in the Committee. It is therefore appropriate that the Committee should explore ways and means for improving its methods of work so that they accord better with today's realities.

Lastly, Mr. Chair, besides thanking you for the gifts, NAM would like to thank all the States that have supported the Movement's draft resolutions. The Movement remains resolute in continuing its constructive engagement aimed at ensuring the success of future sessions of the First Committee. Despite the many challenges in the area of disarmament this year — and most likely next year, too — it is incumbent on us to make progress, and in that regard NAM urges us all to display greater political will and cooperation in our collective effort to ensure a more secure world.

Mr. Mahfouz (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the

members of the League of Arab States here at the United Nations.

The Group of Arab States would like to offer its congratulations and heartfelt thanks to our brother country of Algeria for its very successful and effective work in chairing the First Committee during this session. Over the past month, the international community has witnessed unbiased professionalism on the part of the Algerian chairship in managing the First Committee's work. We therefore wish only to reiterate our hearty thanks and appreciation and to pay tribute to the unique role played by Ambassador Boukadoum, Permanent Representative of Algeria to the United Nations, and to his team from the Algerian delegation. They have been the best possible representative of the Arab Group. We would also like to express our thanks and appreciation to all the members of the Bureau, the officials and members of the Secretariat of the Committee and the members of the United Nations Office of Disarmament Affairs.

In conclusion, the Arab Group would like to express its sincere thanks to the entire international community for its renewed and principled support to the annual resolution submitted by the Arab Group, entitled "The risk of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East" (A/C.1/71/L.2/Rev.1).

The Chair (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to thank the representative of Egypt for his kind words addressed to the Chair, although I doubt that I really deserve them.

Mr. Díaz Reina (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States, I would like to convey our thanks and congratulations for the exceptional leadership throughout this session of the First Committee. We underscore the devotion and efforts of the President and his Bureau, as they were key to the success of the Commission, which once again has faithfully executed its schedule of work. Finally, we recognize the efforts of the Secretariat, interpreters and other United Nations staff for giving their unconditional support so that delegations could advance their work efficiently.

Mr. Adejola (Nigeria): On behalf of the Group of African States, I would like to thank you, Mr. Chair, for your service and leadership throughout the session. As you are a member of our Group, we want to say that we are proud of you. You have worked assiduously and tirelessly to ensure the successful outcome of our

meetings, and we have benefited immensely from your experience and expertise throughout the session as Member States debated, negotiated and voted on resolutions and decisions. The Group also wishes to commend the members of the Bureau for their dedication and hard work in the past month.

We associate ourselves with the closing remarks made by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.

The African Group underscores the value of the First Committee and its potential as a body seized with the duty of addressing the challenges of international peace and security. We therefore call on Member States to remain focused by demonstrating their commitment to reaching the goals of a nuclear-weapon-free world and halting the illicit trade in and proliferation of small arms and light weapons. Finally, the African Group wishes to thank all Member States for supporting our resolutions. We also wish to express our appreciation to the Office for Disarmament Affairs and, most importantly, to the Secretary of the First Committee and the entire Secretariat for providing the necessary support and assistance to all delegations.

Statement by the Chair

The Chair: Before I adjourn the meeting and close the main part of the seventy-first session of the First Committee, allow me to make some final remarks as Chair.

We can say a great deal about the state of multilateral negotiations and efforts on disarmament. I will try to leave aside pessimism, grudges and frustrations. Needless to say, those feelings are real and it would be a mistake to ignore them or to think that we can live with the idea that so far, so good — that nothing needs to happen and that the system suffices as is.

I am from Africa, and there is an African proverb about a goat that tries to feed itself with its own milk. That is simply not sustainable. Let me be more optimistic. There is growing momentum towards multilateral disarmament, and the First Committee has made significant contributions to that end. We have reached some milestones this year in advancing the disarmament and non-proliferation agenda. We even heard some cheers from the public at one point in this Committee, where for a long time there had been only sighs of disapproval or displeasure. For the most part, that was not the case this year.

In the field of nuclear weapons, Member States debated, at a minimum, on how best to move forward. While obviously remaining profoundly divided over the approach to nuclear disarmament, and regardless of the dissent that has been expressed in that regard, the Committee has approved some extremely important proposals. The first is on the convening in 2017 of a United Nations conference to start negotiations on a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons. The second is on the creation of a preparatory process for negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty and the third is on the establishment of a group of governmental experts to consider the role of verification in advancing nuclear disarmament.

On other weapons of mass destruction, the Committee continued to address the question of accountability, following the third and fourth reports (see S/2016/738/Rev.1 and S/2016/888) of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism on Syria. We also had a very useful discussion on the strengthening of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction (BWC) before the eighth BWC Review Conference, to be held in Geneva later this month. Moreover, the Committee also discussed the various proposals on how to ensure space security, such as a draft treaty to prevent the placement of weapons in outer space and the pledge not to be the first country to place weapons in outer space, as well as transparency- and confidence-building measures.

In the field of conventional arms, the First Committee welcomed the outcomes of the Sixth Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat, and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons In All Its Aspects, and began preliminary discussions on its Third Review Conference, scheduled for 2018. It also continued to deliberate on the merits of the Arms Trade Treaty and considered the recommendations of the Group of Governmental Experts on the operation of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms. The First Committee continued to address other pressing issues that I believe will be very important in the future, such as cybersecurity, improvised explosive devices and lethal autonomous weapons systems. In particular, the Committee focused on threats to cyberspace, as work progresses in the Group of Governmental Experts

on Developments in the Field of Information and Telecommunications in the Context of International Security.

On regional issues, the Committee sought to strengthen the role of the United Nations Regional Centres for Peace and Disarmament. It debated how to make progress towards the long-overdue establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction. The views are still strongly divergent. However, a consensus is emerging on the need to revitalize the disarmament machinery and to urgently advance the nuclear-disarmament agenda. While many delegations lamented the lack of progress in multilateral disarmament, especially nuclear disarmament, the Committee has witnessed an unprecedented level of resolutions. I am particularly encouraged by a surge of energy shown by Member States in a bid to break the stalemate and achieve progress towards disarmament goals.

Thus, as the Committee concludes its substantive session today, I am much more optimistic, as I deliver my statement, than I was before. I am sure that the convergence of views on the need to accelerate nuclear disarmament will help us sustain our endeavours to find and expand common ground and narrow the differences among us. The 2017 disarmament calendar is already filled with many important meetings that provide propitious opportunities for advancing the disarmament agenda and that must be seized by all.

I would like to add that we have specific responsibilities with regard to disarmament. We all, each and every one of us, must do our share. I remember a commercial in a Caribbean country I visited years ago that asked every citizen, “What have you done for tourism today?” We should ask ourselves every day during multilateral negotiations, “What have we done for disarmament today?”

We have to improve our foresight and go further in our methods. But I do not want to end on a sour note. I have left everyone a souvenir from my country — at each desk is a handmade painted tile. Spanish speakers, Portuguese speakers and Arabic speakers will know them by different names, but they are all handmade and painted, individually, by a renowned artist in Algeria. It is what we call a hamza, which also means “five”, and it shows an open hand, palm up. Many believe it to be a protection against all evils and misdeeds. It also symbolizes self-defence — bare hands mean no

weapons at all, with palms up. In that connection, I have chosen some verses from a poem from the seventeenth-century English poet John Donne. I hope everyone will understand its meaning and its link with our mandate. I will read some of its verses.

“Any man’s death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind, and therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee.”

Those who have read Ernest Hemingway will understand why he used part of that verse as the title for one of his most famous books.

I wish to thank the conference-room officers, interpreters and sound engineers. Those are people whom we see but do not hear, or hear but do not see. The job is simply unfeasible without all of them. I also include the instrumental support and information provided to

the Committee by the Office for Disarmament Affairs. I thank Mr. Kim Won-soo and his entire team. We appreciate his participation in our meetings. I also must not forget Ms. Sonia Elliott and her whole team. I should also add Kono San, Karen Lock, Alexander Lomaia, Lidija Komatina, Tomas Casas, Victor Leu, Dino Del Vasto, Gerard Castilo, Janet Weissman and John Grain, as well as Lenka Mikhailova from the Office of the President of the General Assembly. I also thank the colleagues from my Bureau, Darren, Kamapradipta, Maria Soledad and Rene.

The Committee will reconvene next year to elect its Chair and other members of the Bureau for the seventy-second session. Let me conclude my remarks by wishing all those who are leaving a safe trip home.

The meeting rose at 12.25 p.m.