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First Committee

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Chair: Mr. Bahr Aluloom (Iraq)

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

Agenda items 52 (b) and 90 to 106 (continued)

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

The Chair: The Committee will first hear a briefing by the Chair of the Group of Governmental Experts on the Operation and Further Development of the United Nations Standardized Instrument for Reporting Military Expenditures, His Excellency Mr. Ion Jinga, Permanent Representative of Romania to the United Nations.

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

Mr. Jinga (Romania), Chair, Group of Governmental Experts on the Operation and Further Development of the United Nations Standardized Instrument for Reporting Military Expenditures: I warmly thank Ambassador Mohammed Hussein Bahr Aluloom, Chair of the First Committee, and Mrs. Izumi Nakamitsu, High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, for inviting me to brief the Committee on the outcome of the work of the Group of Governmental

Experts on the United Nations Report on Military Expenditures, which the Group concluded in July.

For many years, Romania, together with Germany, has been the penholder of the draft resolution on objective information in military matters, including the transparency of military expenditures, which provides the mandate for the United Nations Report on Military Expenditures. We are heartened that the draft resolution has historically been adopted without a vote, which attests to the great importance that the international community attaches to this transparency instrument.

As I have said, the purpose of the United Nations Report on Military Expenditures is to serve as a transparency instrument to help to build trust and confidence among States regarding military expenditures. If a large number of States report regularly to the Instrument and make use of the data provided, the Report can serve as an important tool for enhancing predictability in military matters and reducing the risk of inter-State armed conflict.

The Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) was established by resolution 68/23, with a mandate to review the operation and further development of the Report. That decision was based on the rationale that the Instrument should be reviewed from time to time by experts from Member States in order to ensure that it remains relevant and that its functioning continues to evolve in accordance with experience and pertinent trends and developments.

The GGE met in three sessions of work, held in New York and Geneva. It discharged its mandate

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by delivering a consensus report (see A/72/293) that reflects the Group's deliberations and includes recommendations for improving the Report's operation and enabling its further development. Fourteen Member States responded to the invitation of the Secretary-General and nominated experts to participate in the work of the Group. While I commend them, I want to take this opportunity to appeal to all Member States to be more responsive to future invitations to participate in groups of governmental experts that they themselves have established through the General Assembly.

Although the GGE was made up of experts nominated by their national Governments, its members were encouraged to look at issues both from their national perspective and from the broader view of their region, so that the Group's work would be representative of the entire membership of the United Nations.

The GGE discussed a wide range of issues that have an impact on the operation of the United Nations Report on Military Expenditures, including the level of reporting by Member States, the content and effectiveness of the reporting forms, actions undertaken to promote the Instrument, the electronic database and the online reporting tool maintained by the United Nations Office for Disarmament (UNODA), and cooperation with regional and subregional organizations. In that context, the Group was grateful for the briefings it received from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Union of South American Nations and the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI).

The GGE also addressed new areas and issues that it deemed pertinent to ensuring the sustainability of the Report and its continued relevance and development. It expressed serious concern about the declining trend in reporting by Member States and sought to identify the possible causes. In fact, the average participation in the Report has declined from 71 Member States in the period from 2001 to 2011 to 54 in the period from 2012 to 2016. According to an article published only yesterday by Mr. Nan Tian and Mr. Peter Wezeman, both of whom are from SIPRI — Mr. Wezeman was also a consultant to the GGE — in 2017 the United Nations Secretariat received reports from 41 Governments in time to be included in the 2017 Report on Military Expenditures.

It is therefore important that all Member States make an effort to reverse that trend by translating their universal support for the resolution enabling the Report

into actual participation in the Instrument through the annual submission of reports. What we see currently is a clear mismatch between the political support for the Report and the level of participation in it. If that situation continues, the Report will gradually lose value as an instrument for promoting transparency and confidence-building.

In order to shed light on the causes of the declining reporting, the GGE developed a voluntary questionnaire for Member States that is annexed to its report and will be circulated by UNODA at the beginning of 2018. I would like to respectfully call on all Member States to consider the questionnaire's due importance and allocate some time to respond to it. It is a short and simple survey, but if it generates a high rate of response it will be a valuable tool in helping to improve the functioning of the Report.

The GGE commended UNODA's efforts to promote the Report and develop electronic tools to facilitate reporting and access to the data submitted by States. The Report includes various recommendations aimed at further supporting the work of UNODA and at improving those activities and tools.

A key issue facing the GGE was that of establishing a periodic review process for the Report. The Group considered the matter extensively and recognized that a review process was critical to ensuring the Instrument's continued relevance and further development. However, it concluded that a decision on the periodicity of such a review process would be more sensible if made on the basis of the information acquired from the responses of Member States to the questionnaire I just mentioned.

Finally, I would like to express my deep gratitude to the members of the Group for entrusting me with the responsibility of chairing the GGE and for their hard work, which made it possible for us to deliver a consensus, comprehensive and substantive report to the General Assembly. I would also like to thank the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs for the quality of support and services provided to the GGE by UNODA and the Secretariat here in New York.

The Chair: I thank Ambassador Jinga for his statement.

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

The meeting was suspended at 10.15 a.m. and resumed at 10.20 a.m.

The Chair: The Committee will now resume its consideration of the cluster on conventional weapons. I once again urge all speakers to kindly observe the established time limits.

Mr. Chirapant (Thailand): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the States members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

At the outset, I would like to align our statement with that delivered by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/72/PV.17).

ASEAN recognizes the serious consequences of the historical use of indiscriminate conventional weapons. We also recognize the growing challenges presented by illicit conventional weapons and emerging technologies. We affirm the sovereign right of States to acquire, manufacture, export, import and retain conventional arms and their parts and components for self-defence and the maintenance of security. Nonetheless, it is clear that the use, manufacture, transfer and circulation of conventional weapons have an impact on people's collective security and prosperity. The international community must effectively address that issue.

Each year, there are more than 200,000 civilian casualties caused by small arms in conflict situations. It has been said that such a large number of casualties renders those weapons the real weapons of mass destruction. In that regard, ASEAN supports States' implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, and we look forward to its third Review Conference, in 2018, under the presidency of France. We are also of the view that the full and effective implementation of the Programme of Action requires greater international assistance and cooperation among States.

Regionally, ASEAN ministers continue to address the issue of arms smuggling through ASEAN's Ministerial Meeting on Transnational Crime and the ASEAN Regional Forum. In addition to the annual meeting of ASEAN police chiefs, or ASEANAPOL, the ASEAN Forensic Science Institute supports the promotion of law-enforcement cooperation and information exchange in conducting forensic investigations related to illicit arms.

We are also committed to adhering to international humanitarian law. We continue to deplore the use of any explosive devices aimed at killing or terrorizing innocent civilians. The people of ASEAN continue to be adversely affected by indiscriminate weapons, including the remaining presence of anti-personnel mines, cluster munitions and other unexploded ordnance and explosive remnants of war. That is why the ASEAN Regional Mine Action Centre (ARMAC) was established in 2012 to address the challenges presented by explosive remnants of war in the region. We welcomed the third meeting of the ARMAC Steering Committee, held earlier this year. ARMAC continues to uphold ASEAN's strong commitment to regional mine action and cooperation with relevant institutions, including the United Nations Mine Action Service and the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining. We call on all States, particularly developed countries, to provide financial, technical and humanitarian assistance and cooperation for clearing such weapons and for the reintegration and rehabilitation of victims.

I want to reiterate that ASEAN supports multilateral transparency and confidence-building measures in addressing the global control of conventional weapons. We take note of other developments in addressing the issue of conventional weapons. They include the third Conference of States Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty, the seventh Meeting of the States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions and the sixteenth Meeting of the State Parties to the Mine Ban Convention, to be held in Vienna later this year.

Lastly, we recognize the unique impact that conventional weapons have on women and children, and we urge all States to include gender and victim perspectives in their work on disarmament.

I would now like to share a few thoughts in my national capacity.

Landmines continue to pose a serious challenge to humankind. Even if all States were to agree to ban them categorically today, hundreds of thousands lie hidden, waiting to be activated, unable to differentiate between the footsteps of a combatant and a child. The Kingdom of Thailand is fully committed to fulfilling our obligations under the Ottawa Convention. For the past two decades, all stakeholders, from Government agencies and non-profit entities to local communities, have been working tirelessly to demine all areas.

The Kingdom of Thailand also reiterates the importance of placing people at the centre of mine action. That is why in 2016 we chaired the Convention's Committee on Victim Assistance with that goal in mind. It is clear to us that accomplishing mine clearance is far from straightforward. It takes time and concerted efforts to overcome the complex challenges. We are extending the deadline for mine clearance, which will be considered at the Meeting of States Parties to the Mine Ban Convention in Vienna in December, and we therefore look for support from all States parties to that end.

In conclusion, the Kingdom of Thailand reaffirms that its work in disarmament and arms control is more critical than ever to fostering socioeconomic progress and striving for a just and peaceful society. We will continue to work closely with the international community for our shared aspirations in disarmament.

Mr. Gaffey (Ireland): Ireland aligns itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union (see A/C.1/72/PV.17), and I would like to add the following in my national capacity.

The intersection between peace, security and development is irrefutable. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals provide us with a universal, indivisible framework for the future of humankind and our planet. Disarmament and non-proliferation instruments are critical tools for making concrete progress towards our sustainable development commitments. However, the reality is that conventional weapons are responsible for the majority of deaths from armed violence today. The illicit trade in conventional arms and weapons and their destabilizing accumulation and misuse continue to fuel armed violence in conflict-affected and post-conflict settings around the world.

Ireland notes with concern the ever-increasing proliferation of small arms and light weapons. Illegal and irresponsible arms transfers to conflict regions must be stopped if we are to make progress in ending conflict and criminality and tackling gender-based violence. Ireland strongly supports the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, and we call on countries that have not signed and ratified the Arms Trade Treaty to do so.

The Arms Trade Treaty was conceived to prevent illicit and irresponsible transfers of arms and their

use, which threaten security, destabilize States, violate international humanitarian and human rights law and exacerbate conflict. We welcomed the inclusion for the first time in an arms-control instrument of a provision that gender-based violence should be considered during risk assessments when considering arms transfers. We hope that can set a benchmark for new treaties and that gender-based violence will become a core element of concern in the drafting process.

As we meet, we recognize that the use of cluster munitions in conflicts continues. Ireland reiterates its condemnation of their use in Syria and Yemen and its concern about reports of use elsewhere. We call on all concerned to refrain from using such indiscriminate weapons and urge States to accede to the Convention on Cluster Munitions. We welcome progress made under the Dubrovnik Action Plan, as outlined at the Meeting of States Parties. The power of normative action and of stigmatizing those weapons is clear, and we welcome the news of States planning to join the Convention.

We regard the use of explosive weapons with wide-area effects in populated areas as an increasingly serious challenge for the international community. We share the deep concern about the escalating civilian casualty rates and the damage to critical infrastructure from the use of such weapons in urban areas, as well as their long-term impact on recovery and development, including with regard to gender. Ireland reiterates its support for a process leading to a political declaration confirming the need for compliance with international law with regard to the use of explosive weapons with wide-area effects in populated areas.

Humanitarian demining is an essential contribution to strengthening resilience in fragile situations. Ireland's humanitarian mine action programmes are directly designed to support our commitments under the Convention on Cluster Munitions, the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, and Protocol V of the Convention on Conventional Weapons (CCW). We emphasize the clear links between humanitarian demining and development, opening up access to land for economic development, services, education and employment opportunities. We condemn the use of landmines on the Myanmar-Bangladesh border and are horrified by the reported civilian casualties that have resulted from their use.

The issue of mines other than anti-personnel mines remains one of humanitarian urgency. We are

greatly concerned about the humanitarian impact of the indiscriminate and disproportionate use of such weapons. We believe that the limited provisions in CCW Amended Protocol II have not proved adequate to addressing the issues arising from their use, and we join calls for a formal review of the Protocol and its amendments.

Ireland reiterates that the use of drones or unmanned aerial vehicles must be in accordance with international law, including international human rights and humanitarian law. We welcome continued discussion of the topic, including the relevant principles and norms of international law across the areas of both conventional weapons and human rights. We are encouraged by the active consideration that has been given to the question of lethal autonomous weapons systems at the CCW, and we look forward to the meeting of the Group of Governmental Experts, which should take as its starting point the recommendations of the 2016 expert group.

Finally, we underscore the important role that civil society plays with regard to conventional weapons by highlighting State compliance, tracking the implementation of disarmament commitments, bringing pressure to bear through lobbying and raising public awareness. We reiterate our desire for a more open and inclusive approach to civil society in our meetings.

Mr. Amil (Pakistan): The destabilizing effects of conventional weapons on security and stability at the regional and subregional levels, as well as their catastrophic humanitarian toll, underscore the need for continued action aimed at controlling such weapons. The history and politics of arms regulation dictate a comprehensive and equitable approach that takes into account the priorities and security interests of all States Members of the United Nations.

It is essential to ensure that the pursuit of nuclear disarmament does not permit the destabilizing conventional imbalance that spawned two world wars during the last century. The final document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament provides a clear direction in that regard:

“Together with negotiations on nuclear disarmament measures, negotiations should be carried out on the balanced reduction of ... forces and of conventional armaments, based on the principle of undiminished security of the parties with a view to promoting or enhancing stability at a lower military level, taking into account the need

of all States to protect their security.” (*resolution S-10/2, para. 22*)

Several worrying trends are emerging on the conventional-weapons horizon. The level and the scale of global military expenditures top the list. The present expenditure on international trade in conventional arms is close to \$2 trillion. Ironically, while the total budget of the United Nations is approximately 3 per cent of the world’s total military expenditure, approximately 33 times more is being spent on fuelling and exacerbating conflicts rather than on preventing them. The same troubling trend is mirrored at the regional level, in particular in South Asia, where one State’s military spending grossly and vastly overshadows all others. It has the potential to fuel instability and jeopardize the delicate regional balance.

We remain concerned about the growing transfers of conventional armaments, particularly in volatile regions, that are inconsistent with the imperatives of maintaining peace, security and stability. We must avoid policies of double standards towards South Asia, based on narrow strategic political and commercial considerations. For its part, Pakistan is committed to the establishment of a strategic restraint regime in South Asia that includes an element of conventional force balance. Pakistan does not want to be, and is not, engaged in an arms race in the region.

Pakistan has developed the necessary legislative, regulatory, enforcement and institutional mechanisms for addressing the range of issues relating to conventional arms regulation. An interministerial group deals with them in an integrated manner. We have policy guidelines on exports in place, along with a national evaluation mechanism for regulating their trade. We are taking additional measures to strengthen the enforcement regime, which covers imports and licensing. Pakistan looks forward to the successful conclusion in 2018 of the third Review Conference of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, with a robust outcome.

Pakistan voted in favour of resolution 67/234 B, whereby the General Assembly adopted the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT). As we continue our national review of the Treaty, we believe that its success, effectiveness and universality will depend on its non-discriminatory implementation, especially by strict adherence on the part of States parties to its principles.

The Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) has become an indispensable element of the contemporary humanitarian, disarmament and arms-control machinery, as well as a forum for considering how best to protect both civilians and soldiers from unnecessary harm. Its success lies in the delicate balance it seeks to maintain between humanitarian considerations and the legitimate security interests of States. The CCW also provides the most appropriate forum for addressing the issue of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) in a comprehensive and balanced manner. Pakistan shares the concerns about the acquisition and use by non-State actors and terrorists of IEDs, as well as various types of conventional weapons.

Pakistan was honoured to preside over the fifth Review Conference of the High Contracting Parties to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons last December. The Conference comprehensively reviewed the Convention and achieved significant outcomes. Some important and far-reaching decisions dealing with several substantive contemporary issues were taken, including on the very important issue of lethal autonomous weapon systems. It also put in place the foundation for addressing the serious financial issues affecting the Convention, which must be resolved as a priority and in a sustainable manner.

Ms. McCarney (Canada): We believe that collectively the States Members of the United Nations are working to prevent conflict by better addressing the links between conflict and human rights and development. Humanitarian, security and development work that is gender- and diversity-sensitive helps prevent conflict, rebuild societies and enable sustainable peace.

Conventional arms represent the vast majority of weapons used in all armed conflict. The proliferation and unlawful use of such weapons can and do fuel, intensify and prolong conflict, lead to regional instability, contribute to violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law — including conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence — hinder development and exacerbate structural gender inequality.

It is critical that we universalize and implement the international laws and norms relevant to conventional weapons that we have already agreed on. We must also work to restrict or ban weapon systems that are prone to indiscriminate effects or are excessively injurious. Five are of particular concern.

First, Canada will soon join the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT). Legislation to permit accession was introduced in the Canadian Parliament in April. Our law will meet all requirements of the ATT, and in some areas we will exceed its requirements.

Secondly, this year also marks the twentieth anniversary of the signature of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, which was the culmination of the Ottawa Process and of years of civil society engagement. For Canada, mine action is essential to the success of the Sustainable Development Goals, as it underpins peace and stabilization efforts and the delivery of humanitarian assistance.

In the past year, Canada contributed \$17.5 million to mine action in Afghanistan, Colombia, Iraq, Sri Lanka and Ukraine. The Ottawa Convention's 162 States parties committed to not using those debilitating weapons. We have destroyed more than 51 million mines, and the number of new mine victims has declined significantly. However, we must not rest. Considerable legacy contamination remains and new contamination continues, including from improvised anti-personnel mines. We call on all States to renew their strong support for the Convention's goal of an anti-personnel mine-free world by 2025.

(spoke in French)

Thirdly, as a State party to the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM), we urge all States to take action to achieve the goal of a world free of cluster munitions by 2030. The large number of States already party to the CCM attests to greater awareness of the devastating humanitarian impact of such weapons.

Fourthly, Canada will participate in the Group of Governmental Experts on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems, in accordance with the provisions of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons. A deeper understanding of the complex issues presented by such weapons is required in the international community. The Convention's financial situation must be settled so that important meetings can take place as scheduled.

Finally, we must attack the systematic use of explosive weapons in populated areas. Civilians, including humanitarian workers and medical personnel, along with civilian infrastructure, have become the targets of indiscriminate attacks. We must continue our efforts to strengthen compliance with international

humanitarian law through education, accountability and the sharing of best practices.

(spoke in English)

When discussing those issues, we must also bear in mind the disproportionate impact that many conventional weapons have on civilians. Those effects linger long after conflicts end, in the case of landmines, and spread far beyond defined conflict zones, in the case of small arms and light weapons.

Mr. Mahomed (South Africa): In view of the time constraints, I will limit my remarks to five issues — the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW), the Convention on Cluster Munitions, lethal autonomous weapon systems and the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects.

Since the entry into force of the ATT, there has been an impressive growth in its membership, pointing to the great work that States parties have done to universalize the Treaty. Despite the fact that the ATT sets high norms and criteria, many States share a common understanding on preventing the illicit trade in conventional arms. In that regard, South Africa welcomes States that have recently joined the ATT, especially some countries from the African region — Benin, Cabo Verde and Madagascar.

The full and effective implementation and universality of the Treaty will help to promote international peace and security by reducing the human suffering caused by armed violence, which most often affects women and children. South Africa supports the ATT process establishing the standing working groups agreed to at the third Conference of States Parties, aimed at the creation of a continuous platform for all States, both exporting and importing, to exchange views and share experiences on the implementation of obligations under the Treaty. To that end, we call on all States that have not yet signed and/or ratified, especially the major conventional arms producing and exporting countries, to do so in order to further promote its universalization.

South Africa looks forward to the upcoming Review Conference on the United Nations Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons under the presidency of France, scheduled to take place in June 2018. We call for a renewed commitment to the full implementation of the Programme of Action at

the national, regional and international levels. Great progress has already been achieved through actions aimed at integrating the provisions of the Southern African Development Community Regional Protocol on the Control of Firearms, Ammunition and Other Related Materials.

South Africa is honoured to support and co-sponsor draft resolution A/C.1/72/L.56, on “The illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects”. The draft resolution links directly to Goal 16 of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, which seeks to promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, to provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.

South Africa reaffirms its commitment to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and the humanitarian principles enshrined in it. We attach great importance to that framework Convention, as evidenced by our ratification of all the Protocols annexed to it. South Africa welcomed the outcomes of the fifth Review Conference of the High Contracting Parties to the CCW, which took place in December 2016, particularly the decision to convene a Meeting of the High Contracting Parties to the Convention and to establish an open-ended group of governmental experts to discuss emerging technologies in the area of lethal autonomous weapons systems. However, it is very worrying that financial constraints made it impossible to convene some CCW meetings in 2017. We therefore encourage States that have not met their obligations with regard to assessed contributions to do so in order to ensure effective implementation and participation in future meetings.

Against the backdrop of the Meeting of States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions, held in Geneva in September, concerns remain about the use of cluster munitions in some countries. South Africa’s decision to join the Convention was informed by our belief that not only have such weapons become obsolete as weapons of modern warfare, their recent use in conflicts has shown them to cause unacceptable harm to civilians even long after active hostilities cease. We remain committed to the full implementation of the provisions of the Convention and the outcomes of the Dubrovnik Action Plan of 2015.

Mrs. Rodríguez Camejo (Cuba) *(spoke in Spanish)*: We fully support the statement made by the

representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/72/PV.17).

At a time when 700 million people in the world are extremely poor, 815 million suffer from chronic hunger, 5 million children die from preventable or curable diseases every year and 758 million adults are illiterate, the big arms producers develop increasingly sophisticated and deadly conventional weapons, raising world military expenditure to \$1.7 trillion and threatening international stability, security and peace.

The resources that are currently directed at making war should be used to help eliminate extreme poverty and hunger. The double standards in the area of disarmament must also cease. As well as increasing the already marked imbalances in the production, possession and trade of such weapons, the main producers of conventional weapons with devastating effects try to obstruct developing countries, including through international regulation, from procuring and using certain kinds of much less sophisticated conventional weapons, such as small arms and light weapons, for self-defence purposes. The legitimate right of States to manufacture, import and retain conventional weapons to meet their needs for security and self-defence, in accordance with Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations, must be respected. Cuba reiterates that regulating and limiting the most sophisticated and destructive conventional weapons, which cause most innocent victims in modern wars, should be our top priority.

Cuba considers the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons to be a high priority and strictly complies with its provisions and those of its Additional Protocols I, II in its original version, III, IV and V, to which our country is a State party.

We advocate the adoption as soon as possible of a protocol that prohibits autonomous lethal weapons, also known as killer robots, before they begin to be produced and deployed on a large scale. We also need regulations on the use of weapons with a certain degree of autonomy. We call for the regulation of military attack drones, which cause a high number of civilian victims.

Cuba reaffirms that the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, adopted by the General Assembly, is the main international tool for dealing with the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. The delicate balance

of the Programme of Action should not be affected by the promotion of artificial synergies with other instruments of a different nature and scope that do not enjoy consensus.

We reiterate that the ambiguities, imbalances and limits of the Arms Trade Treaty undermine its effectiveness and efficiency. It privileges States that export conventional weapons to the detriment of the legitimate interests of the remaining States, including in terms of defence and national security. The Arms Trade Treaty establishes subjective parameters that can be easily manipulated for the approval or denial of weapon transfers. There can be no justification for the fact that it does not prohibit the transfer of weapons to unauthorized non-State actors, even though they are the main source of the illicit trade in weapons.

We reiterate that in order to eradicate the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, we must address and deal with the profound socioeconomic causes that give rise to them. International cooperation and assistance must also be adjusted to the national needs of the State. Cuba will continue to work actively and constructively at the third Review Conference of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects.

Mr. Lim (Singapore): My delegation congratulates you, Sir, on your election as Chair of the First Committee. Singapore extend its full support to you and the members of your Bureau as you strive to achieve conclusive outcomes at this session.

Singapore aligns itself with the statements delivered by the representative of Indonesia, on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/72/PV.17), and earlier in this meeting by the representative of Thailand, on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

I would like to raise four points on behalf of the Singapore delegation.

First, Singapore reaffirms its commitment to supporting United Nations efforts aimed at addressing illicit arms trade and the irresponsible use of conventional ammunitions and small arms and light weapons. The illicit diversion of arms has been a key enabler of armed conflict that often threatens global peace, security and socioeconomic development. We should also recognize related growing challenges

and serious consequences, such as the high civilian casualties caused by an indiscriminate use of small arms. Singapore therefore fully supports international efforts to deal with the threats posed by the illicit arms trade and the indiscriminate use of conventional arms.

At the national level, Singapore has a strong export control regime for curbing the flow of illicit arms through our country. Known as the Strategic Goods Control Act, it regulates the export, transshipment and transit of strategic goods — which include conventional military items and dual-use goods — through Singapore.

On the multilateral front, Singapore supports the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and the International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons, which are effective levers for curbing illicit arms production and the trafficking of small arms and light weapons. Singapore has regularly attended the Biennial Meeting of States on small arms. For the sixth Biennial Meeting, in 2016, we were pleased to note the significant progress achieved in advancing the implementation scope of the Programme of Action. We welcome the early consultations held in New York by France for the third Review Conference of the Programme of Action in 2018 and look forward to another round of robust discussions this year.

Secondly, Singapore is a consistent supporter of global efforts to establish common international standards for the regulation of the international trade in conventional arms. Singapore signed the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) on 5 December 2014. Our various agencies and stakeholders are putting processes in place, as well as laying the ground for the necessary domestic legislation to be enacted in order to fully implement the ATT obligations. Singapore welcomes the progress that the ATT has made since its entry into force in 2014. We have actively participated in the Conference of States Parties to the ATT since 2015, and we recognize the significant efforts that have been made to achieve consensus on key issues during those sessions.

Thirdly, Singapore continues to support international initiatives to combat the indiscriminate use of anti-personnel landmines, cluster munitions and conventional weapons. We supported the United Nations resolutions relating to these issues, given the adverse humanitarian impact of such weapons when used

against innocent civilians. We have in place indefinite moratoriums on the export of anti-personnel landmines and cluster munitions. We also welcome the annual meetings of the Steering Committee of the ASEAN Regional Mine Action Centre at its Headquarters in Phnom Penh, which serves as a regional centre of excellence in addressing the humanitarian aspects of unexploded ordnance and explosive remnants of war.

Fourthly, Singapore supports efforts to promote transparency in international arms transfers. We have submitted annual reports to the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms since 1993. Singapore also played a constructive role as a member of the Group of Governmental Experts for the 2016 Register's meeting series. Through the Group's collective effort, the Register's voluntary reporting instrument has been strengthened to better reflect transparency in international arms transfers and developments in conventional arms.

While Singapore agrees that States should fulfil their legal and international obligations with regard to the transfer of arms, we firmly believe that the legitimate security concerns and the right to self-defence of any State cannot be disregarded. In that regard, Singapore is strongly committed to playing its part and stands ready to work with its fellow Member States to preserve peace and security through disarmament.

Ms. Panabokke (Sri Lanka): My delegation associates itself with the statement made by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/72/PV.17).

The widespread use of conventional weapons has been responsible for immense loss of life across the globe. The illicit trade and unregulated use of such weapons, especially in the hands of non-State actors, pose a serious threat to global security and imperil the lives of populations worldwide. Having experienced at first hand the destruction that can be caused by the illicit trade in such weapons, Sri Lanka is acutely aware of the ramification of threats that conventional weapons could pose to a nation's security and its population.

During an internal conflict spanning three decades, terrorist groups in Sri Lanka made ample use of easy access to small arms and light weapons globally in order to procure and use them on our democratically elected Government and the people of Sri Lanka. In the post-conflict phase, Sri Lanka is beginning to uncover not only the extensive overseas networks that have

facilitated the illicit transfer of conventional weapons, but also the extensive arsenal that terrorists have been able to acquire. The massive stockpile of weapons recovered testifies to the ease with which terrorists could procure such weapons globally.

Sri Lanka is deeply committed to combating the illicit trade and unregulated spread of these weapons. Following the eradication of terrorism in our country, we have embarked on a nationwide campaign to recover illicit arms and conduct a fresh analysis of small arms and light weapons, particularly in the areas where illicit arsenals were maintained by terrorists. Sri Lanka regards the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons as an important legal instrument that contributes to the protection of both civilians and combatants from the excessively injurious and indiscriminate effects of conventional weapons, while taking into consideration the legitimate security concerns of States.

As a signatory to the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, Sri Lanka established a national commission against the proliferation of illicit small arms. Currently, the main objective of the Commission is to establish a national database on the civilian use of small arms and light weapons in the country. The Commission has received the support of a variety of actors, including the United Nations. We firmly believe that on their request, developing countries should be provided with assistance for capacity-building in managing this critical issue.

Sri Lanka, being in agreement in principle with international measures to address the proliferation of conventional weapons, believes it is important to ensure that any measures taken by the United Nations and its Member States to curb the proliferation of such weapons do not affect the inherent rights of States to legally procure and hold weapons for self-defence and the safety of their citizens. It is our view that international measures to curb proliferation should also focus on small arms and light weapons. In that context, we believe that countries that produce such weapons have a greater responsibility to monitor and control their spread.

Sri Lanka calls for urgent and meaningful collective action to address that critical issue, in order to ensure the safety and well-being of our people and global peace and stability

Mr. Luque Márquez (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation aligns itself with the statement made by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/72/PV.17).

True to its commitment to disarmament and universal peace and in strict respect for human rights and international humanitarian law, Ecuador reiterates its firm commitment to the Convention on Cluster Munitions, and we reiterate our call for its universalization. International public opinion condemns those atrocious types of weapon, no matter where they are used or by whom. That is why we encourage all States of the world to do the same, without double standards. We welcome Benin and Madagascar's ratification of the Convention since the Committee's last session.

Ecuador also expresses its full support for the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention. In that regard, my country would like to underscore its aim of transforming its borders into places where our people can collaborate effectively and safely through our own and shared development projects with neighbouring countries. In that context, of special note are all of the humanitarian demining programmes that Ecuador has undertaken with Peru along their common border. Ecuador continues to work on demining its territory with a view to completing it as soon as possible. For that reason, we requested and obtained an extension of the initially foreseen term from the Conference of States Parties held in Santiago at the end of 2016.

With respect to small arms and light weapons, my delegation would like to underline the importance of the United Nations Programme of Action and its International Tracing Instrument as the principal universal and consensus-based international framework for preventing, combating and eradicating their illicit trafficking. We also want to emphasize our commitment to the implementation statements at the national, regional and global levels and to the agreements related to its implementation adopted at the 2012 Review Conference. We continue to have positive expectations for the next Review Conference in 2018. Ecuador is also party to the Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.

My country believes that the international community should continue the debate on unmanned aerial vehicles with artillery and lethal autonomous weapon systems. The use of such new war technologies causes serious humanitarian, moral and legal concerns, and the international community, in its various regional and universal forums, should continue to examine the implications they have for international humanitarian law, including the prohibition of such weapons. We therefore regret that for budgetary reasons the meeting of the Group of Governmental Experts on lethal autonomous weapons systems has not yet been held. We hope that this situation can be resolved with the help of all States.

In conclusion, we would like to briefly comment on the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT). Ecuador abstained in the vote on the adoption of the Treaty. At the time, we announced that we would follow its implementation carefully with a view to taking a decision on it, and Ecuador's authorities have continued their analysis. Regrettably, we have to note that developments at the last meeting of the States parties to the ATT have led us to believe that the instrument is being politicized, as its implementation is not always clear and is dogged by double standards. When we participated in the Treaty's negotiation conference, we warned that it was likely to be exploited politically.

Ms. Keobounsane (Lao People's Democratic Republic): My delegation aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representatives of Indonesia, on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/72/PV.17), and of Thailand, on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. However, I would like to add a few remarks in my national capacity.

The Lao People's Democratic Republic has had traumatic experiences of the humanitarian and development effects of the use of conventional weapons. We therefore strongly support and actively participate in the international community's work on conventional arms control and disarmament. That is why we have joined major international instruments in that field, such as the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and four of its Protocols, and the Convention on Cluster Munitions. My delegation further supports the letter, spirit and objectives of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, which we demonstrated by voting in favour of General Assembly resolution 64/56, despite the fact that we are not yet a party to the Convention.

Although conventional weapons do not have the same impact as weapons of mass destruction, their extensive use can also have enormous humanitarian effects with long-term consequences. Explosive remnants of war are an example of weapons that lead to humanitarian problems long after a conflict ends. Explosive remnants of war continue to be a major obstacle to social and economic development in many countries, including my own.

As the Committee may be aware, the Lao People's Democratic Republic is one of the countries most heavily contaminated by unexploded ordnance in the world. During the nine-year war in Indochina, from 1964 to 1973, about 270 million cluster submunitions were dropped on Lao land, of which as much as 30 per cent failed to detonate on impact and were scattered around most provinces of the country. In order to continue to tackle that enormous challenge in a systematic way, in September last year the Lao People's Democratic Republic adopted a national version of Sustainable Development Goal 18, entitled "Lives safe from unexploded ordnance".

The Lao People's Democratic Republic is also concerned about a wide range of the security and humanitarian effects arising from the illicit manufacture, transfer and circulation of small arms and light weapons, since those weapons are widely used by criminals and drug traffickers. We therefore support the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects in tackling that issue.

As one of the countries most heavily affected by unexploded ordnance, the Lao People's Democratic Republic has been actively promoting the universalization of the Convention on Cluster Munitions in order to prevent their further victimization of humankind. We therefore welcome the outcome of the seventh Meeting of States Parties to the Convention held last month in Geneva, and look forward to the eighth Meeting, in September 2018. We would once again like to take this opportunity to urge the countries that have not yet acceded to the Convention to do so in order to achieve a world free from cluster munitions.

I also wish to take this opportunity to thank development partners for their support and assistance in our efforts to rid our country of unexploded ordnance, which in turn will contribute to the implementation of

many targets of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), such as those under SDGs 1 through 8 and 17.

Ms. Roopnarine (Trinidad and Tobago): At the outset, my delegation aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) (see A/C.1/72/PV.17).

For Trinidad and Tobago, like many countries of our region, the security, development and human rights of our citizens continue to be adversely affected as a result of the cross-border illegal activity associated with the unlawful trade in small arms and light weapons and its associated ammunition. However, experience has taught us that those unfortunate realities can be successfully confronted if we adopt a collaborative approach on the basis of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and related instruments, such as the International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons, the Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, and the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT). We are encouraged by the forward momentum we have seen over the past three years to regulate and monitor conventional weapons through the ATT.

My delegation believes that with the determined efforts of all States, the ATT can become a major step towards bringing the international arms trade fully under the rule of law. We note the progressive measures that have taken place within the ambit of the Treaty since its entry into force, and we particularly want to highlight the convening of the third Conference of States Parties to the ATT in September. We are pleased with the establishment of the Voluntary Trust Fund and the decision of the Conference to create an ad hoc open-ended working group on the Treaty's effective implementation. My country urges all Member States that have not yet done so to take the necessary steps to ratify and implement the ATT and the Firearms Protocol.

Trinidad and Tobago looks forward to the third United Nations Conference to Review Progress Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action. We recall the successful conclusion of the sixth Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action, where CARICOM welcomed

references in the outcome document to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, particularly the overt references to Goal 16 and target 16.4. We believe that a good foundation has been laid for the third Review Conference in 2018. In addition, cognizant of the complementarities between the ATT and the Programme of Action and in the light of capacity constraints, the States members of CARICOM continue to seek to identify practical measures that will enable the harmonized implementation of the ATT, the Firearms Protocol and the Programme of Action. We will also continue to advocate for the inclusion of women as actors in the small-arms process. To contribute to the discourse on that issue, Trinidad and Tobago, in conjunction with the Control Arms Campaign, will co-host a side event on 26 October on the margins of this Committee's session.

In times of global financial and economic uncertainty, many Member States find it difficult to mobilize adequate resources to address many issues, including the illegal trade in conventional weapons of all types. Trinidad and Tobago therefore applauds the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean for its increased assistance to the CARICOM countries, including through capacity-building and technical-assistance programmes, as well as advocacy on a range of peace and security matters relevant to the region.

The Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM) has proved to be a key component of the broader normative framework for the protection of civilians. It is unambiguously clear that financing or investing in prohibited weapons undermines the international legal framework that governs their prohibition. My country's accession to the CCM demonstrates our continued commitment to joining efforts to end the terrible harm posed by such indiscriminate weapons. We therefore share the view that investing in their production contravenes the CCM.

Mr. Ait Abdeslam (Algeria): Algeria fully associates itself with the statements made by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and by the representative of Egypt on behalf of the Group of African States (see A/C.1/72/PV.17).

Algeria would like to underscore that the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, and their

excessive accumulation, continues to threaten peace, security and stability in many countries and regions, particularly in Africa. In that context, since their close connection to terrorist groups and organized criminal networks has been acknowledged as a reality on the ground, they have become a source of deep concern to the international community. In the light of those challenges, Algeria continues to make securing its borders from such scourges a top priority, and we are sparing no effort in the work of dismantling criminal networks and fighting the growing threat of terrorism, particularly in the Sahel region.

Based on its national experience, Algeria would like to reiterate that the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All its Aspects and the International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons remain highly relevant with regard to eradicating the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. We therefore call urgently for their full implementation in a balanced and comprehensive manner. As the Programme of Action states, subregional, regional and international cooperation and assistance remain essential to ensuring effective border control in order to achieve the eradication of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. In that respect, Algeria remains strongly engaged in favour of all forms of assistance and cooperation initiatives undertaken at the regional level. We firmly believe that by ensuring the technical and financial assistance of developed countries, the United Nations and other international organizations can help to strengthen the Sahel countries' capacity to combat the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and therefore to dismantle organized arms-trafficking networks and terrorist groups.

In its relationship with its partners, Algeria also promotes the sharing of information and the exchange of expertise and responds to requests for information that it receives through INTERPOL or mutual legal assistance, in accordance with our own domestic law and with international instruments. The establishment of an African police mechanism, the so-called African Police Cooperation Organization, headquartered in Algiers, should greatly enhance the continent's ability to address the threat posed by terrorism and transnational organized crime. In that context, building on the successful conclusion of the sixth Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the

Programme of Action on Small Arms, Algeria remains committed to the implementation of the Programme of Action and, like many other States, looks forward to further action to eliminate the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in advance of the upcoming third United Nations Conference to Review Progress Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action, to be held in 2018.

Algeria's adherence to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects once again affirms our commitment to international cooperation as an indispensable way to ensure peace and security on the basis of the principles of the Charter of the United Nations. It also reflects Algeria's belief in the affirmation of the humanitarian principles and goals that the Convention implies.

To conclude on another positive note, since Algeria's accession to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, we have spared no effort to fulfil its obligations and have worked tirelessly to achieve the noble objectives set 20 years ago by the States parties to the Convention. In that regard, we would like to take this opportunity to announce that this year our efforts were crowned by the fulfilment of our international obligations through the destruction of our remaining stockpile of anti-personnel mines, in accordance with the Ottawa Convention, and the completion of our humanitarian demining operations through the removal of more than 8.8 million mines.

Mr. Yermakov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Given the time constraints, I invite Member States to refer to the written statement of the Russian Federation, which I will sum up in the following remarks.

We share the concerns of our partners with regard to the illicit proliferation and indiscriminate use of various kinds of conventional weapons. It has been rightly pointed out by many speakers that almost all the mass victims of war in the past few decades have been as a result of the use of conventional weapons. The fact is that in the 72 years since the United States dropped the first nuclear bombs — a uranium bomb, on the civilian population of the Japanese city of Hiroshima, and plutonium, on Nagasaki — nuclear weapons have not been used. Thanks to the efforts

of the Soviet Union, and subsequently of Russia and China, nuclear weapons have become a reliable means of deterrence and a guarantee that we would not have another world conflict.

In the current circumstances, therefore, rather than unilateral attempts, divorced from reality, to introduce bans that are unrealistic, practically speaking, what is much more important are such consensus-based, genuinely functioning mechanisms as the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. The strict implementation of the provisions of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) and its five Protocols plays an even greater role, with a uniquely balanced text that takes into account both humanitarian concerns and States' legitimate defence interests.

We also believe in the principles of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention. We particularly commend the efforts of Belarus, which has completed the elimination of nearly 3.5 million PFM-1 anti-personnel mines remaining from Soviet times on its territory. We have not excluded the possibility of our own accession to the Ottawa Convention in the future. Russia also continues to provide other States with considerable assistance in demining, of which the most significant examples are its mine-clearance operations, unprecedented in their scope and complexity, for the Syrian cities of Palmyra and Aleppo.

There are of course a number of successful examples in the area of multilateral control over conventional weapons. Russia's assessments of initiatives such as the Convention on Cluster Munitions and the Arms Trade Treaty are outlined in the full text of this statement. As we all know, the world as a whole has a lot more to offer than our discussions in the First Committee. Yesterday, while we took a break from our meetings, attention was focused on the world-famous Valdai Discussion Club in Sochi, where another highly substantive discussion took place as the President of the Russian Federation spent four uninterrupted hours responding to intense questions from leading political scientists, including some from the West. He gave thorough replies to many extremely complex issues and questions, including some of those we are discussing here. I would like to point out that no other world leader does this, but for our President this very transparent and trust-building form of international communication has already become a tradition. A full transcript of it has been published,

and we strongly advise our partners, especially those from the West, to familiarize themselves with it. It will be crucial to ensure that none of us lose our minds while there is still time to respond to these proposals for constructive and universally acceptable solutions to such urgent issues as the prevention of a conventional arms race in outer space, for example.

Mr. Wang Chang (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) has played an essential role in addressing the humanitarian concerns related to the abuse of conventional arms. As a High Contracting Party to the Convention and all of its five Protocols, China has consistently supported the work of the CCW, faithfully implemented its obligations under the Convention and its Protocols and actively participated in international exchanges and cooperation efforts.

In recent years, humanitarian concerns about lethal autonomous weapon systems have drawn the attention of the international community. China is of the view that countries should abide by the Charter of the United Nations and the laws governing armed conflict while using such weapon systems, which means respecting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of other countries and recognizing the humanitarian consequences and other potential effects of such weapons. China supports and will participate actively in discussions on lethal autonomous weapons within the framework of the CCW.

China emphasizes its focus on the humanitarian concerns that arise from the use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) by non-State actors and supports analysing and formulating reasonable and feasible solutions to the issue within the framework of the CCW. Since the beginning of the year, China and Belgium, as co-chairs of the working group on IED disposal standards, with the assistance of the United Nations Mine Action Service, have developed a set of IED disposal standards aimed at eliminating problems for peacekeeping operations, reducing humanitarian casualties, and in particular providing expertise to victim countries in order to improve their disposal capabilities. China is ready to work with the rest of the international community to solve the problem of IEDs effectively and constructively, through exchange of experience and technological cooperation.

Illicit transfers of small arms and light weapons have so far not been effectively addressed although they make a major contribution to the spread of terrorism

and extremism and exacerbate volatile situations in affected regions. We believe that in order to handle the issue properly, all countries should implement in good faith the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and the International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons, enhance capacity-building and take forward the multilateral process of consistently combating the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. Efforts should be made to actively promote international cooperation in maintaining international and regional stability.

China is in favour of the international community taking the necessary measures to regulate the international arms trade and combat illicit transfers and trafficking of conventional arms. We participated positively and constructively in the negotiation of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) and have participated for three consecutive years as observers in the Conferences of States Parties to the ATT. We will continue to work to establish a just order for the international arms trade and address illicit arms transfers properly so as to maintain regional and international peace and stability.

China considers transparency in armaments an important issue and is committed to enhancing mutual trust with other countries. We place great emphasis on and constructively participated in the work of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms and have submitted an annual report to the Register in the past few years. Last year China actively participated in the work of the Group of Governmental Experts on the United Nations Register and made several useful suggestions. We are ready to continue supporting the work of the Register and working to enhance its universality and effectiveness.

China commends the work of the United Nations Report on Military Expenditures and shows its recognition of its positive role as an important confidence-building mechanism of the United Nations in enhancing mutual trust among countries by actively participating in its meetings. China is actively committed to international humanitarian demining assistance. We have provided ¥90 million in humanitarian assistance to more than 40 countries through donations, equipment, training programmes and field instruction, and have trained 500 professional demining technicians. During the United Nations Peacekeeping Summit in September

2015, President Xi Jinping announced that China would conduct 10 demining assistance programmes over the next five years, and we are now actively honouring our commitments by implementing relevant projects. As we speak, a demining training course for Cambodia and Laos hosted by China is under way in Nanjing, and China will also be providing humanitarian materials to those countries this year. We stand ready to join with other countries in order to enhance cooperation and coordination, promote new developments and innovative efforts in conventional arms control and contribute to addressing the humanitarian issues arising from the use of conventional weapons.

Mr. Herraiz España (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): The complete version of our statement will be placed on the United Nations web page.

Spain fully associates itself with the statement made by the observer of the European Union (see A/C.1/72/PV.17).

In 1997, the international community adopted the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. Spain was one of the first States to ratify the Convention as well as one of the first to destroy its stockpile of anti-personnel mines and to adopt national legislation prohibiting their manufacture, storage and use.

Today, 20 years later, the great contribution of that instrument to reducing the suffering among the world population is evident. Spain reiterates its support for the Convention and the Maputo Action Plan 2014-2019, which have the important objective of achieving a world free of anti-personnel mines and without victims by 2025. It is important to continue making progress on the rehabilitation and reintegration of victims, support for their families and the development of their communities.

Since its entry into force in 2010, the Convention on Cluster Munitions has been strengthened as an effective and innovative instrument. It is necessary to promote its universalization and the establishment of possible synergies with other instruments, such as the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention and the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects. Spain has already taken a step in that direction, since our regulations integrate elements contained

in the three conventions that I have just mentioned, extending the prohibitions in an innovative way to patents, technology and other related activities, such as financing and advertising.

For Spain, the Arms Trade Treaty is one of the most significant achievements in that field in recent years, promoting an international context of cooperation and transparency that contributes to international peace and security and to reducing human suffering. Spain calls on all States to join the Treaty, which is also a key instrument in contributing to target 16.4 of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Small arms and light weapons are the main weapon used in current conflicts, destabilizing entire countries and regions, and moreover are a common link between terrorism and transnational organized crime. We cannot overlook their terrible effects on the civilian population, causing more victims annually than any other kind of weapon. We recall the importance of Security Council resolutions 2117 (2013) and 2220 (2015), which are particularly focused on small arms and light weapons, resolution 2242 (2015), on the role of women in policies to combat the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, and resolution 2370 (2017), which is dedicated to the prevention of access by terrorists to that kind of weapon.

The full implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects of 2001 is also necessary given our desire to contribute to the success of the upcoming Conference to Review Progress Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action in 2018.

Ms. Raadik (Estonia), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.

I highlight the importance of an issue that is often relegated to second place, namely, the need to strengthen control of the trade in ammunition. That key issue should be included in the core of the United Nations Programme of Action.

Finally, Spain also calls for the universalization of the Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, as the only legally binding instrument in the area of firearms.

Mr. Frimpong (Ghana): My delegation welcomes the opportunity to speak on the cluster on conventional weapons. Ghana associates itself with the statements delivered by representatives on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and of the Group of African States (see A/C.1/72/PV.17). However, I would like to make the following statement in my national capacity.

The acquisition and possession of conventional weapons are essential to the protection, defence, security and safety of the citizens of a country. However, Ghana remains concerned over the widespread security implications and the devastating humanitarian and socioeconomic consequences of conventional weapons and their excessive accumulation, proliferation, illicit transfer and circulation. Indeed, the tremendous human suffering, including the high annual death toll, the destruction of communities, forced migration and the loss of property, caused particularly by the proliferation and abuse of small arms and light weapons and their ammunition, cannot be underestimated.

In our view, the nexus between the supply of small arms and light weapons to non-State actors and the pervasive armed conflicts, as well as gun violence, around the world, requires urgent attention. We therefore appeal to arms-producing countries to ensure that the supply of small arms and light weapons is limited to only Governments and duly authorized entities.

Ghana attaches great importance to the further strengthening of our national capacity and the implementation of obligations under the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT). We believe that the ATT, which we ratified in 2015, is critical to the enhancement of security and the promotion of accountability and transparency in international arms transfers. In that context, we welcome the successful convening of the third Conference of States Parties to the ATT, held in Geneva in September, and encourage all Member States that are yet to subscribe to the Treaty, including the major arms-producing countries, to ratify it and to promote its effective implementation and universalization.

Ghana also remains fully committed to the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and the International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons, which are essential for the control and regulation of arms flows, prevent their diversion

to the illicit market and facilitate the investigation and prosecution of related offences. Those instruments are also vital to the promotion of security and the creation of the necessary conditions for sustainable development, particularly in Africa. We therefore add our voice to the clarion call for a balanced and effective implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action at the national, regional and international levels.

Ghana welcomes the consensus outcome of the sixth Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons, held in June 2016. The need for financial and technical assistance to developing countries to improve their capacity to address new and emerging developments in small arms and light weapons manufacturing and technology and the implications for the full and effective implementation of the Programme of Action and the International Tracing Instrument cannot be overemphasized. In that regard, we look forward to the third Conference to Review Progress Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action, to be held in 2018, as an opportunity to build on outcomes from the sixth Biennial Meeting of States, strengthen the Programme of Action, discuss international aid and cooperation and advance the International Tracing Instrument. The Programme of Action must also recognize the contribution of regional arms bodies and give their implementation aspect a mandate.

The real value of small arms and light weapons is arguably the availability of ammunition. In that context, like many States members of the Economic Community of West African States, Ghana believes that ammunition management and control are vital to moving the world closer and faster to the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly target 16.4, which calls for a significant reduction in the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons by 2030. It is therefore imperative that the third Review Conference pay particular attention to the issue. As we speak, preparations are under way in Ghana for a two-day meeting of West African arms commissions to discuss the issue of arms diversion.

Moreover, other issues, such as the gender dimension in the discourse on conventional weapons, particularly the role of women in combating small arms and light weapons, cannot be overstated and deserve equal attention at the third Review Conference, as envisaged under Security Council resolution 2422

(2015). The world should also no longer ignore the issue of survivors of gun violence, and Ghana believes that it is time to bring the issue to the fore and to discuss it at the third Review Conference.

We would like to express our appreciation for the role and contribution of civil-society groups in the small arms and light weapons process and reiterate our call for increased technical and financial assistance to enable them to continue their work.

In conclusion, we underscore the critical importance of the universalization of and adherence to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, the Convention on Cluster Munitions, the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects and the various protocols and conventions on small arms and light weapons amid the resource constraints and overstretched capacities to implement them. It therefore behoves all Member States to demonstrate good faith and the political will to ensure a world without illicit arms flows.

Mr. Camara (Guinea) (*spoke in French*): Like the speakers who preceded me, it is my pleasure to congratulate the Chair on his election and on the wisdom and skill with which he is guiding our work and to acknowledge the other members of the Bureau. I assure them of the full cooperation of the Guinean delegation.

My delegation aligns itself with the statements made, respectively, by the representative of Indonesia, on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/72/PV.17), and by the representatives of Nigeria, during the general debate, and Egypt, during the thematic debate, on behalf of the Group of African States (see A/C.1/72/PV.2 and A/C.1/72/PV.17, respectively).

Recent political and security developments, which are taking place in a fragile and promising global context, suggest that armed violence has a significant impact on sustainable development and human, national, regional and international security. One factor that contributes the most to the prevalence, severity and persistence of such violence is the proliferation and uncontrolled circulation of small arms and light weapons. Over the past decade, significant progress has been made in the form of international and regional initiatives and

agreements, especially in developing countries, which are those which are most affected.

Many States have developed national strategies and plans to deal with the problem. Notwithstanding their usefulness in establishing and guaranteeing the security of States, the widespread use of conventional weapons in every region of the world has generated inter and intra-State conflicts. Africa has seen new and recurring political crises and a formidable number of internally displaced persons, which have resulted in environmental degradation, the destruction of the social fabric and various forms of organized crime. These scourges are compounded by irregular migration and its tragic consequences, as well as maritime insecurity, mainly along the continent's Atlantic seaboard and the Indian Ocean.

Small arms and light weapons pose a threat to peacebuilding, fuel terrorism and violent extremism and, despite commendable efforts, they remain a difficult challenge for the management of global security owing to the increasing enlistment of young people in theatres of operations.

In the face of the gloomy picture that I have just described, on 30 and 31 January the twenty-eighth ordinary session of the African Union Summit in Addis Ababa developed a road map on practical measures to eliminate weapons in Africa by 2020. Its implementation involves member States, the African Union Commission, regional economic communities, civil society, the private sector, religious and academic associations and development partners. In this context, the use of the African Peace and Security Architecture, recognized by many observers and the Security Council as solid, was also recommended with the Peace and Security Council as an appropriate mechanism for the prevention, management and settlement of conflicts.

Guinea, which has been an asylum country and continues to suffer the consequences of the civil and political wars that have bled dry several neighbouring countries, has become both a transit country and one of illegal possession and circulation of small arms and light weapons. That is why the Government is implementing a 2017-2021 national plan to build lasting peace in collaboration with civil society. The document focuses on the general overview of Guinea; the national context of small arms and light weapons issues, in particular their background; their sources; areas prone to trafficking; the legal framework; the estimated

budget; and success factors, including the reform of the defence and security forces through capacity-building.

Guinea is a State party to the Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons, their Ammunition and other Related Materials of the Economic Community of West African States, which it ratified in 2012, and the Arms Trade Treaty, which it ratified in October 2014. I am duty bound to express the deep gratitude of the Guinean Government to all partners for their technical and financial assistance, especially the European Union, China, Switzerland, France, Germany, Norway and the United States. In addition, I should also recall the positive role and leadership of His Excellency Mr. Alpha Condé, President of the Republic and current Chairperson of the African Union, who is personally involved in the efforts to settle the crises facing neighbouring countries of the subregion and other States of the African continent.

In conclusion, I am sharing the relevant observations and recommendations made by other delegations throughout our deliberations on this issue with a view to eliciting urgent and effective responses to the challenge of combating the small arms and light weapons issue. These responses include, first and foremost, conflict prevention through dialogue and mediation and the use of judicial mechanisms; secondly, accelerating the rapid implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty and its ownership; thirdly, the implementation of the Ottawa Convention and the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction; as well as other relevant instruments and initiatives, which the Egyptian delegation recalled; and fifthly, the symbiotic relationship between disarmament and development in the context of the international community's efforts to eliminate hunger and poverty by 2030.

As time is short, I will end my statement there and provide the full statement on the website.

Mr. Kpayedo (Togo) (*spoke in French*): As this is the first time I am taking the floor, I would like to begin by congratulating the Chair and the members of his Bureau on the way in which he is leading the deliberations of our Committee. I assure him of the support of the Togolese delegation. As he has so clearly demonstrated during our discussions, I have no doubt that, under his able and wise leadership, we will be able to hold fruitful discussions that enable us to rise to the challenges that lie ahead of us in this Committee,

which deals with crucial issues for our Organization and our States.

Togo expresses its solidarity with the statements made respectively by the representative of Indonesia, on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, and the representative of Egypt, on behalf of the Group of African States (see A/C.1/72/PV.17).

My delegation also thanks the Secretary-General for his report (A/72/122), which provides important and detailed information on the multilateral efforts made to eradicate the scourge of trafficking in small arms and light weapons, in accordance with the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, which Member States adopted in 2001. Indeed, the link between the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Programme of Action is highlighted in this report, based on the conclusions of the sixth Biennial Meeting of States on Small Arms, which was held in New York from 6 to 10 June 2016. We welcome this progress which undoubtedly will make it possible to inculcate in our minds the need to eliminate these weapons, which fuel on a daily basis a climate of insecurity that is not conducive to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

Togo, like other countries, is concerned by the extent of the illicit circulation of small arms and light weapons. It is clear that the phenomenon of small arms and light weapons jeopardizes peace and security, destabilizes States and undermines their sustainable development. Today it is especially important in West Africa, where such weapons help to fuel the proliferation of crimes of all kinds, rampant terrorism and transnational organized crime, thereby posing a security challenge that is a heavy burden on our States.

That is why Togo is resolutely committed to combating this scourge in all its forms. At the subregional, regional and global levels, Togo is working with other States to control the flow of small arms and light weapons. At the national level, measures are being taken in accordance with the United Nations Programme of Action to counter this phenomenon. Among these measures, we can mention the serious work of the National Commission to Combat the Proliferation, Illicit Circulation of and Traffic in Small Arms and Light Weapons, which is the linchpin of this fight. The Commission, established in 2001, has carried out many activities, including regular public-

awareness campaigns of the importance of registering these weapons, regardless of whether they are legal or illegal, and the destruction of seized illegal weapons. In 2013, this exercise resulted in the destruction of nearly 10,000 weapons and nearly 700,000 munitions, according to the Commission's statistics.

The Commission has also identified local manufacturers and distributors of homemade small arms and light weapons and registered weapons held by civilians. To date, 5,579 small arms have been registered. Obviously, all these initiatives have contributed to significantly reducing insecurity in the country, which is caused primarily by these arms. We must stress that all these actions — and we welcome their results — have benefited from the support of the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa, which helps Member States control the circulation of these weapons by strengthening the capacities of the actors involved in this battle. In this regard, I pay tribute to the Centre for its pivotal role in controlling these weapons, which present major security challenges in Africa and elsewhere.

In conclusion, my delegation calls on Member States to sponsor and adopt by consensus draft resolution A/C.1/72/L.21, entitled "Assistance to States for curbing the illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons and collecting them", which has been submitted by Mali on behalf of the countries members of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). The objective of this draft resolution is precisely to strengthen international cooperation by launching an appeal for more support for the initiatives of ECOWAS in combating the proliferation of those weapons.

Mr. Denктаş (Turkey): Turkey aligns itself with the statement made by the observer of the European Union under this cluster (see A/C.1/72/PV.17). The following remarks are in our national capacity.

The Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects (CCW) is an indispensable part of international law on conventional weapons with indiscriminate effects. Turkey fully implements the Convention and its annexed Protocols to which it is a party and encourages adherence to that fundamental international regime.

We welcome the successful outcome of the fifth Review Conference of the CCW. Issues such as improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and lethal

autonomous weapons systems continue to be important. Turkey is concerned about the increasing global impact of IED attacks worldwide, in particular through terrorist acts. We support the adoption of the political declaration on improvised explosive devices. We believe that the United Nations has an important role to play in addressing the problem of IEDs, and we supported resolutions 70/46 and 71/72.

As we mark the twentieth anniversary of its opening for signature, the Anti-Personnel Mine-Ban Convention continues to be significant in putting an end to the suffering and casualties caused by anti-personnel mines. As a party to, and a strong supporter of, the Convention, Turkey is committed to its obligations. Turkey has met its commitment relating to article 4, having destroyed a total of approximately 3 million mines, and is in the process of fulfilling its article 5 obligations. We have made voluntary contributions to the Implementation Support Unit and the sponsorship programme, as well as to clearance efforts in third countries.

An increasing proliferation of ballistic missiles capable of delivering weapons of mass destruction constitutes a threat to international peace and security. Turkey welcomes the advancement of the universalization of The Hague International Code of Conduct.

As we stated in our remarks during the general debate (see A/C.1/72/PV.7), the threat posed by the proliferation of illicit conventional weapons, particularly small arms and light weapons, is no less important than that of weapons of mass destruction. More than 500,000 people are killed with small arms and light weapons every year. Also, there is a well-documented relationship between the illicit trade of small arms and light weapons, on the one hand, and conflict, terrorism and organized crime, on the other. Hence the illicit transfer, destabilizing accumulation, uncontrolled spread and misuse of small arms and light weapons must be eradicated.

Turkey remains committed to the effective implementation and further strengthening of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and the International Tracing Instrument. We welcome the successful conclusion of the sixth Biennial Meeting of States on the Programme of Action, which took place last year. We hope that the third Review Conference, to be held next year, will

provide us an opportunity to strengthen the Programme of Action.

Turkey participated actively in the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) process from its outset, thereafter signing the Treaty. By establishing the framework for responsible trade in small arms and light weapons, the ATT also supports the implementation of target 4 of Sustainable Development Goal 16. Pending approval of the Turkish Parliament for ratification, we would like to reaffirm our keenness to accede to the Treaty in the near future. In the meanwhile, being a member of all four export-control regimes, Turkey already has in place a robust export-control mechanism and implements the related principles meticulously.

As I conclude, let me reiterate my country's commitment to international cooperation on all the issues addressed under this cluster.

Mr. Elbaz Starinsky (Israel): I will deliver an abbreviated version of my statement; the full version will be available online.

In the past few years, conventional weapons have been acquired and have proliferated in the Middle East region in unprecedented qualities and quantities, posing an acute and imminent threat to the lives of millions of people. Those weapons find their way, through various illicit routes and means, into the hands of oppressive regimes, terrorist organizations and terror-sponsoring countries, which use them to spread violence and extremism. Those illicit and unauthorized recipients of conventional and non-conventional weapons deliberately use them against civilian populations, causing the wide-scale suffering, misery, death and displacement that have become part of the everyday lives of the region's inhabitants.

It should be noted that some States in the Middle East region not only do not try to stop or curb the activities of terrorist organizations, but constantly encourage and support them, including through financing, training and the transfer of large quantities of sophisticated weapons. That results in continued destabilization and upheaval in the region. In that context, it should be emphasized that Iran, in an attempt to gain regional dominance and spread its extremist ideology, uses proxy organizations and entities to inflict terror and engage in hostilities. In other cases, such as in Syria, the regime tragically uses its weapons, conventional and non-conventional alike, against its own population.

The threat posed by some weapons systems in the wrong hands, such as man-portable air defence systems (MANPADS), short-range rockets, mortars and surface-to-air missiles, is immense, as the devastating effects of those weapon systems have been demonstrated in the past. Weapons in general, and those weapon systems in particular, should be in the hands only of responsible sovereign States that comply with the international norms and standards undertaken by them and that have, inter alia, adequate stockpile-management and security mechanisms.

Special responsibility to prevent unauthorized proliferation and abuse lies with exporting States that transfer weapons. Efforts to tackle that issue should be exercised at the national, regional and international levels alike. We are vigilant and determined to counter that growing peril in the region, both individually and in collaboration with other stakeholders.

In that context, Israel would like to highlight the menace of the proliferation of MANPADS in the region and beyond. The deteriorating situation and security challenges in recent years have been characterized, inter alia, by the loss of control over territories, the looting of poorly guarded and managed arms stockpiles and massive diversions and transfers of arms, among which are thousands of MANPADS. Many of those MANPADS, including advanced systems, have fallen into the hands of non-State actors. While MANPADS are legitimate weapon systems when in the hands of responsible States, in the wrong hands they pose an imminent threat to aviation at large and to civil aviation in particular. The threat to civilian airliners is particularly worrisome due to its potential mass effect.

MANPADS are easy to dismantle, conceal, assemble and operate, and they have a long shelf life. Therefore, they pose a significant challenge to border security and security officers. Greater attention should be given to that threat and to improving the effectiveness of the implementation of existing instruments that deal with it.

The United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and the International Tracing Instrument are important instruments in combating the illicit trade in, and diversion of, arms. Israel looks forward to the third Review Conference, to be held in June next year, and expects a successful outcome and a fruitful

exchange of views. The preparatory process, headed by France, is very useful, and we would like to express our appreciation for its hard work. The topics discussed — among which are the menace of small arms and light-weapons diversion, illegal self-manufacture of small arms and light weapons, technological developments, international and regional cooperation and effective implementation of the Programme of Action and the International Tracing Instrument — are paramount to the effort to curb the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and their diversion.

The Programme of Action focuses mainly on the implementation of that instrument at the national level, and that is indeed the level at which the majority of our efforts should be aimed. However, the international dimension, including the regional level and multilateral forums, should not be neglected. States that share vital interests should maintain open channels of communication and promote and enhance their cooperation at the bilateral, regional and multilateral levels. In the Middle East, although many States share the same security challenges and interests, we unfortunately lack that kind of cooperation at a time when we need it most.

With regard to MANPADS, as it is a global threat, it should be addressed on a global level, because international cooperation is essential. We call on the international community to address that threat in an expedited and comprehensive manner and include it on the agenda for the 2018-2024 cycle of the Programme of Action.

Israel values the mechanism of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms and submits its report on an annual basis. It is most unfortunate that Israel is almost the only country in the Middle East region to submit annual reports. Israel urges all States to submit their reports, subject to their national security considerations.

In Israel's view, the fact that the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects (CCW) strives to strike the necessary balance between military necessity and humanitarian considerations in the application of international humanitarian law makes it an important instrument in the field of conventional weapons. It is also an appropriate forum for discussing many challenges in that sphere. We wish

to thank the Secretariat for its hard work within the CCW, and we look forward to the meeting in November, at which further issues such as improvised explosive devices, mines other than anti-personnel mines, lethal autonomous weapon systems and explosive weapons in populated areas will be discussed.

Mr. Zimba (Zambia): Zambia is cognizant of the fact that the illicit proliferation, circulation and trafficking of conventional weapons, particularly small arms and light weapons, continue to pose a serious threat to continental security. They fuel human conflict and cause a significant loss of life and serious violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law. Furthermore, they undermine conflict-prevention efforts and hinder post-conflict development.

In view of the outcome of the sixth Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, and the discussions in the second Open-ended Meeting of Governmental Experts on the Programme of Action, the Government of the Republic of Zambia aims to ensure the full implementation of the Programme of Action.

Zambia is fully aware that individual Member States have the primary responsibility to mitigate the threats posed by the illicit proliferation, circulation and trafficking of small arms and light weapons. Zambia will continue to renew its commitment and efforts towards the full and effective implementation of the relevant regional and international instruments through nationally led and owned programmes, such as weapons documentation, training and information-sharing at the subregional and regional levels.

We are also cognizant of the fact that the illicit proliferation, circulation and trafficking of arms and ammunition in our region are significantly aided by porous borders. In that regard, my country welcomes the calls for regional approaches based on strong inter-State cooperation that fosters the sharing of intelligence and information on suspected traffickers, trafficking routes and suspected diversion activities.

As the Committee is aware, Zambia is a landlocked country with an extensive land border, which it shares with eight other nations. Just like any other landlocked country, Zambia always wants its borders to be bridges for, rather than barriers to, cross-border cooperation and

regional integration. Because of its geopolitical location, Zambia has sought to establish itself as a trade-friendly transit hub, or “innocent passage”. In enforcing transit control, we issue transit and transshipment permits and devote resources to controlling the transfer of strategic goods through our territory. Any entity seeking to move arms and military equipment through Zambia’s territory is therefore required to apply for the relevant transit permits before shipment can be authorized.

In that regard, let me suggest that a lack of information-sharing between exporting and importing countries and the transit States poses a significant challenge in this area. Cooperation and information-sharing are required among all stakeholders in order to mitigate the risk of diversion and to make it possible to understand what goods are in transit. As a developing country, Zambia supports the call from sub-Saharan countries for assistance to enable them to build sufficient institutional capabilities. Furthermore, technical resources are needed to fully implement and effectively enforce the two instruments.

Lastly, Zambia is of the view that women’s participation in combating the illicit trade in small arms is vital, because women are the most affected by armed violence, directly and indirectly. Furthermore, it is common knowledge that women suffer the long-lasting effects of war, displacement, hunger and disease, while often becoming the sole, or main, providers of the household. Zambia seeks to ensure the involvement of our women by including them in policy formulation and by ensuring their participation in workshops dealing with armed domestic violence and the gender dimensions of armed violence.

Mr. Tsymbaliuk (Ukraine): Ukraine fully shares the concerns of the international community that the illicit transfer, accumulation and misuse of conventional arms and their ammunition, in particular small arms and light weapons, pose a serious threat to security and stability in the world. We therefore support international efforts to address that challenge, including export- and border-control measures, stockpile management, international cooperation and assistance.

At the national level, with regard to conventional arms, Ukraine attaches particular importance to ensuring effective export-control procedures that meet all current international requirements. Ukraine strictly adheres to the respective resolutions and decisions of the United Nations, the Organization for Security and

Cooperation in Europe and the Wassenaar Arrangement on Export Controls for Conventional Arms and Dual-Use Goods and Technologies. The Security Council resolutions that impose sanctions regimes, including arms embargoes, provide guidelines for the adoption of relevant legislation and regulations in Ukraine and are strictly implemented by the national authorities.

We continue to view the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects as an important and universal tool in global efforts to combat the threat posed by that type of weapon. We support the proper implementation of the Programme of Action and of the International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons by all States. Ukraine looks forward to the third United Nations Conference to Review Progress Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action and its International Tracing Instrument, to be held next year. We also support and have co-sponsored draft resolution A/C.1/72/L.56, on the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects, submitted this year by Japan, Colombia and South Africa. Furthermore, we share the view that the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms continues to be an instrumental transparency and confidence-building measure in the area of the conventional arms trade.

There remain significant challenges in countering the indiscriminate use and effects of improvised explosive devices (IEDs). We support continuing efforts to develop international and national measures to combat the production and use of IEDs. We therefore supported draft resolution A/C.1/72/L.15, on countering the threat posed by improvised explosive devices, submitted by Afghanistan.

Addressing the destructive power of conventional armaments continues to be of the utmost importance in the context of regional security. In that respect, we must again stress that the Russian military aggression against Ukraine, using regular military forces armed with modern types of conventional armaments and ammunition, has significantly undermined the existing system of conventional arms control. The Russian Federation continues its massive illicit transfers of military goods to our territory, thereby deliberately destabilizing the security not only of the subregion but also of all Europe. It totally ignores the persistent calls

of the international community to establish effective border controls.

Among other things, such illegal transfers are a great challenge to the proper implementation of the Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons, which serves as the only universal international tool to address the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. We have no right to ignore such illicit supplies of conventional weapons from the Russian Federation, in particular to the illegal armed groups guided by Russia operating in certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine.

Ukraine recognizes the important role of the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects in addressing post-conflict measures to minimize the occurrence, risk and effects of explosive remnants of war.

As a State party to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Production, Stockpiling and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Landmines and on Their Destruction for more than 10 years, Ukraine acknowledges the fundamental character of the Convention in minimizing the occurrence, risk and effects of landmines.

Again, as a result of the armed aggression of Russia and the offensive actions carried out by the Russia-guided illegal armed groups operating in certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine, my country is having to deal with the drastically increased number of dangerous explosive remnants of war, which cause severe casualties among civilians, including children. Those explosive remnants of war, as well as anti-personnel mines, which have indiscriminate effects, are planted by illegal armed groups in residential areas and along communication routes between inhabited areas, thereby violating the Convention. In fact, they pose a greater threat to the civilian population than to military personnel. Ukraine is deeply concerned about such activity and calls upon Russia to make every effort to stop it.

Mr. Ko (Myanmar): My delegation aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/72/PV.17) and with that delivered earlier today by the representative of Thailand on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

It is no secret that conventional weapons are killing and maiming many people worldwide. Civilian casualties include innocent women and children. We are living in a world in which more than 500,000 people are killed every year in armed conflicts by arms or explosives.

If no proper actions are taken, the proliferation of illicit arms and their diversion can lead to other serious consequences. They can fuel and sustain armed conflicts, impede the lives of vulnerable communities and encourage human rights violations, including the recruitment of child soldiers, because the affordability and portability of light weapons incite combatants to arm children easily. They can facilitate organized crime, terrorism and gun violence, as exemplified by the Las Vegas shooting on 1 October, which claimed 58 lives.

Myanmar supports the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and its International Tracing Instrument as international norms to curb illicit arms. In February last year, Myanmar hosted a workshop on small arms and light weapons with the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific to enhance the capacity to implement the Programme of Action. Myanmar also participated in the sixth Biennial Meeting of States on the Programme of Action in June 2016, and welcomes the outcome. We believe it laid good foundations for the upcoming third Review Conference, to be held in June 2018, from which we expect fruitful results.

Although capacity constraints still prevent Myanmar from joining the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects, we have been participating in meetings of the Convention as an observer. We are of the view that the Convention can effectively address humanitarian concerns that result from the indiscriminate use of conventional weapons. We welcome the setting up of the Group of Government Experts on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems, established by the fifth Review Conference.

We affirm the inherent right of sovereign States to acquire, manufacture, import and retain conventional weapons and their components for responsible use in safeguarding sovereignty. In principle, Myanmar supports the provisions of the Convention on the

Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction and the Convention on Cluster Munitions. Relevant stakeholders in Myanmar are studying those instruments for a better understanding, with the aim of joining them at an opportune time. We support the initiatives taken under those instruments to avert the indiscriminate use of landmines and cluster munitions, which can have adverse humanitarian impacts.

Myanmar's mine-risk education inter-agency working group, which is made up of members from relevant ministries, was established in 2012. The working group has been conducting training workshops on mine-risk education in various States and regions, in collaboration with United Nations agencies, international non-governmental organizations and other non-governmental organizations.

As a country experiencing internal armed conflict, we are well aware of the human suffering and havoc caused by small arms and light weapons. We believe that the Arms Trade Treaty is instrumental in stopping the illicit proliferation of conventional arms, and it plays a pivotal role in the realization of target 4 of Sustainable Development Goal 16. We welcome the decisions and recommendations taken at the third Conference of State Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty, held in Geneva in September. We also look forward to a rewarding outcome of the fourth Conference of State Parties, under the presidency of Japan. Modern technology is making small arms and light weapons increasingly lethal these days. That growing trend cannot be overlooked when we address the challenge posed by small arms and light weapons.

Mrs. Jakubonė (Lithuania): Lithuania aligns itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union (see A/C.1/72/PV.17). I should like to make some additional remarks in my national capacity.

The illicit trade and proliferation of small arms and light weapons have a negative impact on the safety and security of civilians, as well as on the security and stability of entire States. They undermine the rule of law, prolong protracted conflicts and impede development. Against that backdrop, we deem that the international community's efforts to promote a universal approach to tackle the illicit trade of small arms and light weapons could significantly improve global security and stability. We welcome the international community's initiatives and attempts to develop better-

coordinated approaches and instruments related to conventional weapons, including small arms and light weapons. Evidently, synergies of various arms-control instruments could facilitate the implementation and efficiency of different regimes.

Lithuania continues to advocate for the need to increase transparency in the arms trade and is convinced that the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) has contributed to more transparent and responsible trade. Lithuania calls on States parties to make their reports available to the public and welcomes the decisions taken at the third Conference of States Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty. The establishment of the standing Working Groups on Effective Treaty Implementation, on Transparency and Reporting, and on Treaty Universalization is an important step in the advancement of the aim and purpose of the ATT. Nevertheless, much more remains to be done, as the Treaty's full potential can be reached only when it is applied universally and implemented vigorously.

Lithuania is greatly concerned by the increasing global impact of improvised explosive devices, large quantities of anti-personnel landmines and unexploded remnants of war, which continue to gravely affect civilian populations. For that reason, Lithuania contributes to the European Union Trust Fund for Colombia within the framework of the Global Demining Initiative for Colombia.

The world faces numerous security challenges today. One of them is in the middle of Europe. The conflict in eastern Ukraine continues to be fuelled by a constant inflow of ammunition, weaponry and fighters from the Russian Federation. The weaponry is being supplied in unascertained but significant quantities. Russian-occupied Crimea is another example of the Russian-controlled inflow of weaponry to Ukraine. We call upon the Russian Federation to implement its commitments, halt its support for illegal armed groups and stop the inflow of weaponry and equipment into the sovereign territory of Ukraine.

The lack of transparency and predictability of military activities can pose a serious challenge to peace and security in different regions of the world. Lithuania remains convinced that, in the face of all the challenges to the security environment in Europe, the principles enshrined in the Helsinki Final Act remain essential for European security and stability. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe remains the

ultimate framework for regional cooperation in the area of conventional arms control and confidence- and security-building measures. We believe that the refined Vienna Document and the non-selective implementation of the Open Skies Treaty are fundamental to increasing transparency and building trust and predictability in Europe.

In conclusion, let me express Lithuania's strong commitment to active engagement and cooperation in the area of conventional arms control.

Mr. Mohamed (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I thank the Chair for this opportunity, as well as his excellent leadership over our work.

I align myself with the statement delivered by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and with the statement by the representative of Egypt on behalf of the Group of African States (see A/C.1/72/PV.17).

Like many other countries, the Sudan has been negatively impacted by trafficking in conventional weapons, which has exacerbated regional conflicts that claim many victims every year. Member States are well aware that trade and trafficking in those kinds of weapons are often linked to economic aspects that are made more complicated by natural factors, such as climate change, drought and desertification, and subsequently by intense competition for water and food resources, along with other reasons. That has driven population groups to acquire weapons to protect themselves and as a sign of strength.

My country is aware of this serious phenomenon and the importance of eradicating it. For that reason, the Sudan has always actively participated in all the relevant international and regional forums, in addition to working hard at the country level through our national office to fight the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. We believe that there is a close linkage between the proliferation of such weapons and transnational organized crime, terrorism and drug trafficking. In that regard, the Sudan undertakes many efforts in the context of the African Union, the League of Arab States, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development and the States of the Sahel and the Sahara. We also work bilaterally with neighbouring countries to delineate our borders and strengthen border and customs control. We underscore that combating the proliferation of such kinds of weapons should begin with arms-producing countries, rather than the affected

countries. Furthermore, the arms-producing countries must pledge not to export such weapons to groups or individuals.

The Sudan continues to work hard to fight against mines and improvised explosive devices in areas of armed conflict. The Sudanese Government is implementing plans for the elimination of all kinds of mines, with the cooperation of United Nations Mine Action Service and other countries, such as Japan and Italy. That cooperation has led three regions in the Sudan — namely, Al-Qadarif, Kassala and the Red Sea — to being declared free of mines by the end of December 2018.

With its partners, the Sudanese Government has succeeded in demining 105 square kilometres of its territory of all kinds of mines. We have destroyed 3,236 anti-armour mines, 10,158 anti-personnel mines and 79,269 improvised explosive devices. However, despite all the great efforts by the Sudanese Government and the Sudanese National Mine Action Centre and our partners, there remains much to be done. We therefore need the assistance of the international community.

As part of its efforts to achieve sustainable stability and development throughout the country, at the beginning of this year the Sudanese Government launched a campaign for the voluntary collection of weapons from the citizens of Darfur and adjacent areas, during the first phase of the campaign, and, subsequently, for raising awareness of the dangers of such weapons. A law that provides for strict punishment of violators who carry arms without a permit from the competent authorities will be applied after the first phase. Moreover, through that campaign, the Sudanese Government hopes to tackle the root cause of instability and conflict in the Darfur region, namely, arms proliferation.

Due to time constraints, my full statement will be uploaded on the relevant United Nations website.

Ms. Donnelly (New Zealand): The First Committee can take pride in the role it has played over the years in helping to set and monitor the standards of international humanitarian law, standards that help to protect all our citizens in places of conflict. Yet in brutal conflicts around the world, some of the choices being made with regard to targeting and weapon selection represent flagrant violations of international humanitarian law, while others raise serious doubts about compliance with such law. Once again, it is civilians who pay the

price — civilians such as those in Syria, where cluster munitions are among the inhumane weapons being used in that horrific conflict.

New Zealand condemns any use of cluster munitions by any actor. We are deeply concerned that the number of victims of the use of cluster munitions more than doubled between 2015 and 2016. We call on all States to reject the use of that inhumane and indiscriminate weapon and to join the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM) as soon as possible.

As Coordinator for National Implementation Measures under the Convention, New Zealand would welcome the opportunity to engage with any State regarding the national measures necessary to fully implement the CCM. We are pleased to have been able to support two workshops, on universalization and implementation, this year — one in Uganda in May and a second in New York earlier this week.

New Zealand also encourages all States to join the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction and, more broadly, to support demining efforts. We recognize the importance of following through on our shared objective of achieving a landmine-free world by 2025. For our part, New Zealand is pleased to have provided NZ\$9.1 million over the past year in support of mine-action programmes around the world, and to have provided a voluntary contribution of NZ\$40,000 to the Ottawa Convention's Implementation Support Unit in 2017.

It is a matter of considerable regret that the late and non-payment of assessed contributions under the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects (CCW) have constrained that body from holding the meetings agreed at the successful Review Conference of the States Parties to the CCW last year. New Zealand looks forward to the meeting of the open-ended Group of Governmental Experts on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems taking place next month in Geneva, and hopes that real progress can be made towards identifying and addressing the challenges that such systems pose to international humanitarian law.

New Zealand also looks forward to the debate on the implementation of Protocol III — the Protocol on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Incendiary Weapons — at next month's meeting of the CCW, and

welcomes the opportunity to explore issues relating to the use of explosive weapons in populated areas. There is an increasing and compelling body of evidence that highlights that the downstream consequences of the use of explosive weapons in populated areas can result in civilian death and injury that far outweigh even the immediate civilian casualties caused by such attacks. In keeping with our pledge at the World Humanitarian Summit last year, New Zealand remains committed to addressing the issue, including through a political declaration.

As a proud member of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), New Zealand participated actively in the development of the governance arrangements and processes needed for the initial establishment of the Treaty, including the Voluntary Trust Fund. However, the time has come to start shifting our focus from institutional arrangements to ensuring that the Treaty delivers on its humanitarian and security promises. As the President of the International Committee of the Red Cross, Mr. Peter Maurer, said to the third Conference of States Parties to the ATT last month, the words of the Treaty remain hollow if they are not matched with actions and do not result in changes in policies and behaviours. President Maurer spoke of the gap between promise and implementation, and between law and respect for the law, and the suffering that results. New Zealand looks forward to working with other States parties and our civil society partners to address that gap.

We also intend to host a Pacific conference in February next year in Auckland to bring together representatives of all our neighbouring Pacific islands with a view to improving the universalization and implementation of a number of conventional weapon-related treaties in our region, and the Arms Trade Treaty in particular.

Finally, New Zealand also looks forward to engaging in the third United Nations Conference to Review Progress Made in 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 so as to ensure a substantive outcome that takes forward our shared agenda on preventing, combating and eradicating the illicit trade in such weapons.

Mr. Elisaia (Samoa): The unregulated and illicit trade in conventional arms fuels conflicts, supports criminal activities, disrupts the peaceful lives of

communities and contributes to human rights abuses. Conventional weapons are the most common types of weapons employed in armed conflicts. They are responsible for untold injuries, deaths and human suffering among millions of people, which undermines political stability and economic development — two critical foundational blocks for countries to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Samoa is an island nation with only a civilian police force. We do not have a military force because we do not need it, and even if we had one, it would not guarantee us total peace and security. In fact, our only security is the rule of law to protect us.

The Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) has the potential to make a real difference in reducing the deadly consequences of the illicit global trade and in protecting innocent civilians. True, the ATT itself cannot stop all unlawful arms transfers but, if effectively implemented, it can contribute to transparency in the arms trade and make it substantially more difficult and expensive for weapon buyers and suppliers to defy rational and common-sense standards. We truly need a strong ATT to prevent and combat the diversion of arms and ammunition that is causing human suffering around the world, including in my own Pacific region.

Our faith in the rule of law was the underpinning that led to Samoa being one of the first Pacific island States to sign and ratify the Arms Trade Treaty. As a party to the Treaty, we are committed to implementing our obligations.

The first is our reporting obligation. Despite our limited human, technical and financial resources, Samoa has submitted its reports on its implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects.

The second is the development of relevant national legislation. Samoa's Conventional Arms Bill 2017 is before our Parliament for its third and final reading. The Conventional Arms Bill addresses gaps in existing legislation and ensures the translation and implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty in the local context.

The third obligation is continued investment in our border-control measures. Samoa continues to invest in building the capacity of our law-enforcement and border

agencies with regard to international standards on transferring small arms and light weapons, cross-border collaboration and maintaining a registry and data in a centralized information-management system in order to assist in our reporting obligations and in strengthening and securing our borders against illegal arms trade and in order to control the transfer of conventional arms. We acknowledge with thanks the ATT Voluntary Trust Fund, which supports capacity-building of our small island States and regional programmes.

Despite the progress made so far, challenges remain for Samoa in the full implementation of the Programme of Action in terms of human, technical and financial resources. Our challenges are shared by other Pacific island States. With our individual national efforts, we can achieve only limited success; therefore, those efforts must be complemented by a regional approach, with the cooperation of other Pacific countries, as the most effective and efficient way for us to combat the problem. A regional approach would mean cross-border collaboration, information and data-sharing and resource-sharing in terms of surveillance, which, all combined, would assist Pacific island States in ensuring regional security with benefits that would carry over in supporting our national efforts.

We welcome the progress made at the third Conference of State Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty, particularly the establishment of the standing Working Groups on Effective Treaty Implementation and on Treaty Universalization. The work of both Groups is critical for the early realization of our cherished hope for a peaceful and secure world. Small island developing States have a valuable contribution to make at our forthcoming discussions of the issues, and we welcome the sponsorship programme that will support our participation so that we are able to provide such needed input.

Let me conclude by appealing once more to those Member States that have yet to become States parties to the Arms Trade Treaty to do so soon, both to ensure the Treaty's early universalization and, importantly, its effective, efficient and comprehensive implementation.

Mr. Morales López (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): Controlling conventional weapons is essential to preventing their illicit trafficking. We should recall that it is conventional weapons, more than weapons of mass destruction, that cause the greatest number of victims in our countries.

For Colombia, the achievements reached in the Final Agreement to End Conflict and Build Peace have yielded tangible results for our commitment to disarmament and arms control. Therefore, the relinquishing of weapons by the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia, thanks to the support received from the United Nations and the international community, means that 9,000 weapons, 1,765,862 rounds of ammunition, 38,255 kilograms of explosives, 11,000 grenades, 3,528 anti-personnel mines, 46,288 electronic detonators, 4,370 mortar bombs and almost 52 kilometres of detonating cord have ceased to exist and will never be a threat to any citizen of our country or the world. It is noteworthy that, in that process of relinquishing weapons in Colombia, the number of weapons surrendered is greater than the number of fighters.

With regard to anti-personnel mines in Colombia, I am pleased to point out that, in addition to our commitments to international legal instruments after the internal armed confrontation that lasted more than five decades in my country, the Comprehensive Action against Anti-personnel Mines is a proven, successful and replicable tool for building and strengthening peace. Colombia's experience provides daily evidence of how the Comprehensive Action against Anti-personnel Mines is a powerful tool for restoring, promoting and guaranteeing the rights of individuals and communities. Its purpose is to bring about more safe schools, more roads, more passable rivers and pathways, more land for crops, more parks and sports areas for children and, ultimately, a better country to live in.

Improvised explosive devices leave thousands of victims every year, and recent statistics confirm that that type of explosive causes the most civilian victims around the world. They also affect critical infrastructure and possibilities for socioeconomic development and instil fear in the communities affected. One of the main challenges that Colombia has had to face involves the contamination of its territory with improvised explosive devices used as anti-personnel mines. In its decontamination process, my country adheres to the International Mine Action Standards, which are currently guiding military demining interventions and thanks to which national standards for anti-mine action have been developed. The use of those standards has allowed both civilian demining organizations and the military forces to make rapid progress aimed at meeting those requirements and guaranteeing

quality interventions that returns the territories to the communities.

In addition to improvised explosive devices used as anti-personnel mines, the Colombian authorities have had to deal with other types of devices, including devices set off remotely or with timers. In that connection, we have had to deal with cases of car bombs, gas cylinders used as projectiles, improvised mortars and the use of handmade explosives made with civilian materials.

We have developed initiatives to counter the indiscriminate effects caused by improvised explosive devices based on two main approaches: the understanding of those devices from a broad focus that includes different types of devices developed by illegal armed groups, and the development of devices with characteristics similar to anti-personnel mines, also used only and exclusively by groups outside the law.

As a country profoundly affected by the problem of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and its link with transnational crime and common and organized crime, among other crimes, that issue is of fundamental importance to Colombia. We have therefore led actions to deal with it at the global, regional and subregional levels.

In our country's view, international, regional and national efforts should be directed at establishing mechanisms that allow for a fluid exchange of information on issues within the competency of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, with a view to promoting the development of marking technology, consolidating registry systems and implementing technologies to track weapons that complement existing systems, such as that used by INTERPOL.

Finally, with regard to the Arms Trade Treaty, we acknowledge the responsibilities flowing from that important instrument since its opening for signature, in 2013, which is why we have been working with the greatest speed on the ratification process of the Treaty.

The Acting Chair: I shall now call on those representatives who have requested the floor in the exercise of the right of reply. In that connection, I would like to remind all delegations that the first intervention is limited to 10 minutes and the second to five minutes.

Mr. Hallak (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): The representatives of the Israeli entity, by

levelling accusations against other States, always try to evade reality and ignore the enormous number of international resolutions adopted against it. The representative of the Israeli entity overlooked the fact that, when it comes to the illicit arms trade throughout the world, it is Israeli officers who trade in such weapons to destabilize every region of the world.

The Israeli entity is currently overtly supplying armed terrorist groups in Syria — in particular the terrorist organizations Da'esh and the Al-Nusra Front and their affiliated groups — with all kinds of weapons, equipment and ammunition, including toxic chemical materials. We have sent numerous letters to the Security Council regarding those violations. The Israeli entity violates every international convention on conventional and non-conventional disarmament, as well as Security Council resolutions related to combating terrorism. The Israeli entity has used all kinds of internationally prohibited weapons in its recurrent attacks on the peoples of the region.

It is well known that the Israeli entity has introduced all forms of terrorism to our region. The internationally proven involvement of the Israeli entity in the illicit arms trade throughout the world promotes terrorism at the international level and protects drug gangs, organized crime and secessionist movements, to the extent that the Israeli entity has organized international gangs for trafficking in organs of children.

Everybody knows that Israeli officers are responsible for the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. It is sufficient to look at the various hotspots all over the world to know that Israeli illicit arms dealers are involved. The role of Israeli weapons in fuelling conflicts, such as the outbreak of the crisis in the Caucasus and including every hotspot in Africa, is evident to everyone.

Mr. Yermakov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We feel obliged once again to respond to what has been said regarding the situation in Ukraine. Of course, we sympathize sincerely with the Ukrainian delegation here in New York, just as we do with all the brotherly people of Ukraine, to whom we are linked by a common history, culture and language. We believe that we will also share a bright future together. Obviously Russia has never fought, and never will fight, its brothers in Ukraine. It is deeply regrettable that in the First Committee Ukrainian diplomats still have to recite lying words that have nothing to do with

the real situation in their country. Unfortunately, since the armed anti-constitutional coup in Ukraine in 2014 when, with the direct support of the United States of America and the European Union, ultranationalist forces came to power in Kyiv and unleashed a bloody civil war in Ukraine, our Ukrainian brothers have ended up in a terrible situation. There is a more detailed exposition of the reasons for the civil war and the current state of affairs in Ukraine in the statement made yesterday at the Valdai Discussion Club's forum in Sochi by President Vladimir Putin of the Russian Federation.

As for the inappropriate statement of the representative of Lithuania on Ukrainian issues, however, we would prefer not to dignify it with a response. We believe that an overwhelming majority of people in this room understand that a response from Russia to these noises from Lithuania is unnecessary.

Mr. Elbaz Starinsky (Israel): The accusations uttered here today by the Syrian delegation not only are ludicrous but also serve to prove the growing detachment of the Syrian representative from the reality on the ground. While we sit here, the Al-Assad regime continues to relentlessly and intentionally target its own citizens, using both conventional and non-conventional weapons, while violating its international obligations.

It is unfortunate that, instead of proposing ways to improve the situation or undertaking to stop the slaughter of its own citizens, the Syrian delegation chose to do the only thing they know how to do — baselessly blame other countries.

Mr. Wood (United States of America): I take the floor to exercise my right of reply to respond to the comments made by the representative of the Russian Federation.

First, the charges about United States involvement in what happened in Ukraine are simply just false. The world knows that. The United States has been a leader in uniting the international community and in demanding that Russia end its aggression in Ukraine. We will not make any trade-offs with Russia that would affect European security or Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

I would like to reiterate, as we have said many times, that Minsk-related sanctions will remain in place until Russia withdraws its forces from eastern Ukraine and its support for so-called separatist leaders there, and fully implements the Minsk agreements. The Crimea-

related sanctions will remain in place until Russia returns control of the Crimean peninsula to Ukraine.

Mr. Leschenko (Ukraine): I feel obliged to respond to remarks made by the Russian representative. I will be brief.

The Ukrainian delegation stands by the statement it delivered on the issue of conventional arms and would like to underline that the conflict in certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions is due to Russian aggression against Ukraine, which started with the occupation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea. We would like to stress that this is not a civil war or an internal conflict. If the Russian Federation were to withdraw its armaments and military personnel from our territory, and if it were to stop the illicit transfer of weapons and fighters to Ukraine, then the conflict in the Donbas region would be settled peacefully almost immediately thereafter, without any external assistance.

Mr. Hallak (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): We have previously referred to the fact that the representatives of the Israeli entity, when the Israeli position is weak, always propagate erroneous information, turning facts upside down in an attempt to evade responsibility for all the crimes and acts of aggression committed by the Israeli entity. It is well known that it is Israeli officers who are the major traders in conventional arms, especially illicit arms, around the world. Some of them are retired but now work for Israeli arms-production companies and others. For decades, the Israeli entity has relied on what it calls arms diplomacy. The world will never forget the terrorist crimes committed by the Israeli entity in Palestine, Lebanon, Egypt, Syria and all other Arab countries.

There is international consensus that the real danger in the Middle East lies in the Israeli nuclear weapons. That danger derives from the fact that the Israeli entity possesses not only nuclear weapons, but chemical, biological and other weapons, and it is capable of delivering those weapons to areas far beyond the Middle East.

Mr. Yermakov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I would like to respond briefly to the statement by the representative of the United States. As long as we are talking about the Minsk agreements, it would be a good idea to first read the text of the agreements and then discuss who has obligations under them and what those obligations are. For several years now, our American partners have regrettably made unfounded

allegations that someone is not implementing the agreements. But the agreement clearly outlines what Kyiv should do and when, and yet none of the Minsk provisions that Kyiv was obliged to fulfil have been implemented. Needless to say, therefore, the whole situation is at a total impasse.

With regard to the further statement by our Ukrainian colleague, I would like to point out again that the Russian Federation and the Russian people have never fought and never will fight against the brotherly people of Ukraine, however much some in the West dislike that fact. The situation in the Donbas region is a very difficult one. The simple fact is that Kyiv must stop killing peaceful civilians there. As we all know, the ultra-nationalist leadership in Kyiv has declared that all the residents of that Ukrainian territory terrorists — in other words, that 5 million people, women, children and the elderly, are all terrorists — and has begun destroying them with heavy artillery and aircraft. Those are facts. They are not some sort of Russian fabrication. They are reality, as confirmed by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, among others, and by the reportage on the ground. Unfortunately, the situation is not improving. But everything must come to an end, and we are confident that the conflict will be resolved and this bloody chapter of European history will come to an end in the very near future and in the best possible way.

Mr. Leschenko (Ukraine): I have to react to the remarks of my Russian colleague. I would like to say a few words about the Minsk agreements. Ukraine remains fully committed to the peaceful resolution of

the conflict in eastern Ukraine and to implementing the Minsk agreements in good faith. However, sustainable de-escalation and enabling progress on all tracks of the Minsk agreements remain blocked by Russia's unwillingness to implement the security provisions of those agreements, including a sustainable and comprehensive ceasefire regime and the withdrawal of Russian troops, fighters, mercenaries and weaponry from Ukrainian territory.

Whereas Ukraine persistently calls on Russia to respect its commitments on the ceasefire regime and to withdraw heavy weaponry as basic requirements of the Minsk agreements, the Russian Federation ignores those calls. The hybrid Russian forces in Donbas continue to resort to shelling with artillery and mortars. Ukraine has regularly drawn the attention of the international community to such numerous facts, which have been registered by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine, which operates in that region. The presence of proscribed weapons, in violation of withdrawal lines, in areas controlled by Russian hybrid forces is reported by the Special Monitoring Mission on a nearly daily basis. We emphasize that Russia's denial of the facts and its full-fledged direct role in the conflict in Donbas, coupled with the ongoing aggression and failure to implement the commitments undertaken, remain the key obstacle to bringing peace and a normal life to the people of the Donbas region. Ukraine is not killing those people.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.