



# General Assembly

Seventy-third session

## First Committee

4<sup>th</sup> meeting

Wednesday, 10 October 2018, 10 a.m.  
New York

Official Records

Chair: Mr. Jinga. . . . . (Romania)

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

### Agenda items 93 to 108 (continued)

#### General debate on all disarmament and international security agenda items

**The Chair** (*spoke in French*): I should like to remind all delegations that the rolling list of speakers for this phase of our work closed yesterday at 6 p.m., in accordance with our programme of work and timetable. I therefore hope that all delegations intending to take the floor during the general debate were able to inscribe their names on the list before the deadline.

Delegations are also reminded that the list of speakers will open tomorrow for the thematic discussion segment, which will start next week on Wednesday, 17 October.

With regard to today's list of speakers, I urge all delegations taking the floor to kindly respect the time limit for statements. I remind delegations that I continue to count on their cooperation in limiting statements to eight minutes, when speaking in a national capacity, and to thirteen when speaking on behalf of several delegations. I once again encourage representatives with longer statements to deliver a summarized version and to provide the full text of their statements on the PaperSmart web portal. I would also like to encourage speakers to speak at a reasonable pace, as I myself am striving to do, to allow for interpretation.

**Mr. Escalante Hasbún** (El Salvador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I am speaking on behalf of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC).

At the outset, CELAC wishes to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as Chair of the First Committee for this session, as well as the other members of the Bureau. We also wish to thank Ambassador Bahr Aluloom of Iraq for his tireless efforts as Chair during last year's session.

Our region has a long-standing tradition of promoting disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control — priority issues that should be on the agenda of the United Nations and that are also key components of maintaining international peace and security. We also reaffirm our determination and commitment to continuing to promote general and complete nuclear disarmament as the highest priority of our Community and the urgent need to achieve the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

CELAC reaffirms the need to advance towards the primary objective of nuclear disarmament and achieve a sustainable world that is free of nuclear weapons. In that regard, we oppose the improvement of existing nuclear weapons and the development of new types of such weapons, which is inconsistent with the obligation of disarmament and non-proliferation. We also reiterate the need to eliminate the role of nuclear weapons in strategic doctrines and security policies.

We believe that the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, as well as the early entry into force of both instruments, will enhance the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean, known as the Treaty of Tlatelolco, and the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) on

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the path towards eliminating those weapons of mass destruction in a transparent, verifiable and irreversible manner, within clearly established time frames.

We believe that the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the cornerstone of the disarmament and non-proliferation regime, is vital to achieving nuclear disarmament and international security. In that regard, we call on States not party to the Treaty to adhere to it as non-nuclear-weapon States, without further delay and without preconditions. We reaffirm the commitment of our States to the NPT and to the full implementation of its three fundamental pillars: nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and the peaceful use of nuclear energy.

We also reaffirm the inalienable right of States to conduct research on, produce and peacefully use nuclear energy without discrimination and in accordance with articles I, II, III and IV of the NPT. CELAC will work constructively and proactively towards achieving a final document that is able to support those commitments and obligations at the 2020 NPT Review Conference, in particular by actively participating in its Preparatory Committee in New York in 2019. Moreover, we reiterate our determination to work towards achieving a successful Review Conference of the States Parties to the NPT.

CELAC reiterates its firm condemnation of any kind of nuclear test anywhere in the world, and in that regard we note with satisfaction the announcement made by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea on the suspension of its nuclear tests. We welcome the dialogue recently initiated among the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the Republic of Korea, the People's Republic of China and the United States. We hope that the process will lead to a stable and lasting peace, including the complete denuclearization of the Korean peninsula.

We commend the implementation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action and call on the remaining parties, as well as the International Atomic Energy Agency, to pursue its implementation in order to completely resolve the problem. CELAC highlights that the agreement has once again demonstrated that dialogue and negotiation are the only effective ways to resolve the differences among States.

CELAC member States recognize that the ongoing threat of the illicit manufacture, transfer and circulation of small arms and light weapons,

their parts, components, ammunition and excessive concentration and their unchecked distribution in many regions of the world has a wide range of humanitarian and socioeconomic consequences and poses serious threats to peace, reconciliation, security, stability and sustainable development on many levels. While CELAC welcomes the adoption of the outcome document (A/CONF.192/2018/RC/3, annex) of the 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 in 2018, there is still a great deal of work to be done at the multilateral level, such as advancing transparent and non-discriminatory negotiations and moving towards the adoption of a legally binding instrument on marking, tracing and intermediation, in order to prevent the diversion of small arms and light weapons towards illicit markets. We will continue to actively participate in the current 2018-2024 Programme of Action cycle. CELAC notes with satisfaction that the outcome document of the 2018 Review Conference recognizes the importance of the issue of ammunition as a means to strengthen the implementation of the Programme of Action.

CELAC hopes that the Arms Trade Treaty can contribute to providing an effective response to the serious consequences of the illicit trafficking and non-regulated trade in arms for many individuals and States, particularly through the diversion of weapons to non-State actors or unauthorized users, which is often linked to transnational organized crime. We also hope that the Treaty will contribute to the prevention of armed conflict, armed violence and violations of human rights and international humanitarian law. At the same time, we call for the Treaty to be applied in a balanced, transparent and objective manner and with respect for the sovereign right of States to safeguard their self-defence, in accordance with Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations.

The issue of anti-personnel landmines continues to require the attention of the international community. CELAC highlights the importance of cooperation in demining and in assisting victims, and hopes that the successes achieved in recent years will continue. CELAC supports all international efforts to mitigate the suffering caused by cluster munitions and to reduce their use against civilian populations, in clear violation of international humanitarian law. We also recognize and appreciate the resolve of all States to

take immediate multilaterally agreed action in response to humanitarian problems caused by cluster munitions.

CELAC also stresses its firm conviction that the complete elimination of chemical and biological weapons is a priority for disarmament and non-proliferation. In that regard, CELAC emphasizes the importance of the universal adherence by all States to the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological Weapons Convention. Furthermore, we highlight the importance of full compliance by all States parties with the provisions and requirements of those two instruments.

CELAC member States share the common interest of promoting and expanding the exploration and use of outer space for exclusively peaceful purposes, to the benefit and in the interests of all States and as an asset for humankind, regardless of the degree of social, economic or scientific development. In that regard, we encourage the strengthening of international norms for States in the field of information and telecommunications within the context of international security by fostering actions and strategies aimed at strengthening cybersecurity and preventing cybercrime, bearing in mind that an open, safe, stable, accessible and peaceful environment for information and communications technology is essential for all.

In conclusion, CELAC reaffirms the role of the Conference on Disarmament (CD) as the single multilateral disarmament negotiating body. The Community regrets that the CD has not been able to fulfil its mandate for two decades. CELAC urges all members of the CD to demonstrate political will so as to ensure the beginning of substantive work, without further delay, by adopting and implementing a balanced and comprehensive programme of work that advances the nuclear disarmament agenda, including by negotiating a treaty on nuclear weapons, a universal, unconditional and legally binding instrument on negative security guarantees, an instrument to prevent an arms race in outer space and a non-discriminatory treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices that serve both non-proliferation and disarmament purposes. The Community regrets that the Disarmament Commission has been unable to produce recommendations on nuclear disarmament and the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. It is important that the Commission fulfil its mandate, as noted by the General Assembly at its first special session devoted to disarmament.

CELAC reaffirms its willingness to cooperate with the members of the First Committee to achieve concrete results at this session. The Community calls on all delegations to demonstrate the political will necessary to enable this deliberative body to fulfil its mandate and make substantive recommendations to the General Assembly. Moreover — and this is my last point — the Community wishes to highlight the important work carried out by the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as the assistance it provides to the countries of the region to implement disarmament measures in various areas.

**Ms. Fitzmaurice** (Ireland): Ireland aligns itself with the statements made by the observer of the European Union and by the representative of South Africa on behalf of the New Agenda Coalition (see A/C.1/73/PV.2). A longer version of this statement will be submitted, and we will elaborate on a number of issues during the thematic debates.

First, I congratulate you, Sir, on assuming your chairmanship, and I would like to assure you of my delegation's full support to you and the members of your Bureau.

Ireland regards the work of the First Committee as key to achieving the vision of a safer and more secure world for all, set out in the Charter of the United Nations and, more recently, in the Secretary-General's *Securing Our Common Future: An Agenda for Disarmament*. In a year in which we have experienced challenges to norms against the use of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs), violations of international humanitarian law and political stalemate on issues of substance, it is vital that we use this opportunity to recommit to sustainable peace and security. The unrestricted spread and use of weapons, whether conventional or WMDs, threaten human rights, the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the very future of our planet.

This year, Ireland marks a number of important milestones in nuclear disarmament. Sixty years ago, former Foreign Minister Frank Aiken introduced the first of what became known as the Irish resolutions, which laid the groundwork for the adoption of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) 10 years later. In his speech introducing the resolution, Minister Aiken expressed hope that true prestige would finally be won by those countries that, by deliberate

choice and in the interests of peace, refrain from producing nuclear weapons.

The NPT has been successful. It is the backbone of the non-proliferation regime, yet its original promise of disarmament remains unfulfilled. Nuclear weapons are still at the centre of some States' security doctrines. Costly modernization programmes add to international tensions and instability. Put simply, as long as nuclear weapons exist, the security of all States is in danger. That is why, as we mark the one-year anniversary of the adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), we should be heartened by the deliberate choice that many Member States have made for a world free from nuclear weapons. Ireland firmly believes that the TPNW complements and strengthens the existing nuclear disarmament architecture. We encourage all States to sign it so that we may never again witness the unparalleled humanitarian and environmental catastrophe of a nuclear-weapon explosion.

The deteriorating international security environment continues to be cited as justification for slow progress on disarmament. The global security environment is not an excuse for inaction; rather, it reinforces the need for urgency. Ireland would particularly welcome a focus on risk-reduction measures, such as de-alerting. The entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty also remains a top priority and would represent a tangible gain for the disarmament and non-proliferation regime. What is lacking is not favourable conditions but political will and practical implementation. We all have a responsibility, as part of the global community, to support non-proliferation efforts in a pragmatic way. This year, as a tangible expression of Ireland's commitment, we are co-chairing, together with Iceland, the Missile Technology Control Regime.

When we convened last year, Ireland, with many others, expressed alarm and condemnation at the use of chemical weapons in Syria. We regret that one year on, Syrians continue to suffer and that the norm against use has been further undermined through instances of chemical-weapon use in Malaysia and, more recently, in the United Kingdom. We once again affirm that the use of such weapons is an outright violation of international law. We believe that the first step towards accountability is attribution. We therefore welcome the decision taken at the fourth special session of the Conference of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention with respect to an attribution

mechanism. We also welcome the establishment of the International Partnership against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons. Those further strengthen the international community's ability to hold perpetrators of those crimes to account.

The nature of conflict is changing. It is becoming more urbanized and protracted. Conventional weapons continue to cause unacceptable harm to civilians in conflict zones. The use of explosive weapons with wide-area effects in populated areas continues to devastate communities and poses a serious challenge to the implementation of international humanitarian law. Ireland fully supports the recommendation of the Secretary-General to develop a political declaration, appropriate limitations, common standards and operational policies, in conformity with international humanitarian law, relating to the use of explosive weapons in populated areas.

Ireland was pleased that the Secretary-General's new agenda for disarmament recognizes the importance of gender as a cross-cutting issue. Ireland will co-host a side event on 15 October, in this room, to explore concrete measures to achieve the agenda's call for the equal, full and effective participation of women in all decision-making processes related to disarmament. Ireland also encourages greater opportunities for civil society to engage with the work of the Committee. Our discussions would be enriched by its expertise and diverse views.

The issue of the United Nations need to respond to technological advances is not a new one. We saw the dawn of the atomic age just days after the signing of the Charter. Now, as then, we must keep our eyes firmly on the future of weapons technology. As the Secretary-General highlighted when he opened this year's high-level week, "the prospect of machines with the discretion and power to take human life is morally repugnant" (*A/73/PV.6, p.4*). Autonomous weapons systems pose considerable moral, legal and ethical dilemmas. Such weapons must always remain under meaningful human control. Only human accountability can ensure full compliance with international humanitarian law.

Ireland's long engagement in disarmament is part of our DNA. We are a consistent independent voice that keeps the protection of people and our planet at the heart of disarmament. That is one of the reasons why we are putting ourselves forward as a candidate for election to the Security Council for the term 2021-

2022. Our commitment to multilateralism, as shown by our track record on disarmament, will remain as strong as ever.

**Ms. Thompson** (United States of America): On behalf of the United States delegation, I congratulate you, Sir, and the Romanian delegation on your election as Chair of the First Committee at its seventy-third session. We pledge our full support as you ably guide the important work of this body.

The United States has long been a global leader in efforts to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) and advance nuclear disarmament in ways that improve the security of all States. As we mark the fiftieth anniversary of the opening for signature of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the fruits of those efforts are apparent. Fears of cascading nuclear proliferation were not realized, and we are all more secure and prosperous as a result. On the disarmament front, the total United States nuclear stockpile is down by approximately 88 per cent since its Cold War peak. The United States and Russia continue to implement the New START Treaty and met the central limits of the Treaty in February, placing United States and Russian strategic nuclear stockpiles at their lowest points since the 1950s.

But the numbers do not tell the whole story. The United States ended the production of fissile material for use in nuclear weapons in the 1990s and has removed hundreds of tons of fissile material from weapons programmes. We continue to abide by our moratorium on nuclear explosive testing and support the International Monitoring System and International Data Centre to ensure that all States can have confidence in our ability to detect nuclear explosions. Those actions clearly demonstrate our commitment to practical steps on nuclear disarmament, consistent with our undertaking in article VI of the NPT to pursue effective measures to that end.

The United States is pleased to have played a leading role in the substantial progress made in recent decades, but we know that there is more work to be done. At the 2018 NPT Preparatory Committee, the United States submitted a working paper on creating the conditions for nuclear disarmament — what we are calling the “CCND approach”. We unveiled the CCND at the Preparatory Committee, as we believe it is the most realistic way to address disarmament. I know that the word “conditions” has caused consternation for

some, so allow me to clarify — this is not an effort to place additional conditions or roadblocks on progress on nuclear disarmament; rather, “conditions” refers to the state of the security environment. The CCND is an invitation to all States to join us in a realistic dialogue about the state of the security environment — the world as it is — and how we can shape that environment in a way that makes progress on disarmament possible.

While we view the CCND as an initiative that will strengthen and help maintain the NPT, key factors of the security environment that shape States’ thinking on disarmament involve States that are not parties to the NPT and issues that go beyond what can be accomplished in the NPT review process. The First Committee, given its universal membership and the broad range of security issues we deal with in this forum, is an ideal venue for continuing and broadening this discussion.

A realistic assessment of the security environment must recognize, regrettably, that we have much work to do, given that tensions are rising across the world. To cite a few, long-running regional tensions remain high in South Asia, the Middle East and elsewhere. Nuclear stockpiles in Asia are growing. Key nuclear-weapon States, namely, Russia and China, are modernizing and expanding their nuclear capabilities and pursuing destructive counter-space weapons. At the same time, they are becoming increasingly assertive in challenging the existing international order. The Al-Assad regime in Syria continues to flout its international obligations and the standards of human decency by using chemical weapons against its own people, and Russia and Iran continue to shamelessly defend those actions and shield the regime from consequences in various international forums.

Similarly, Russia itself used chemical weapons in its brazen assassination attempt against the Skripals in Salisbury in March 2018, using a Novichok chemical agent. In addition to that blatant violation of the Chemical Weapons Convention, Russia continues to violate its obligations under other arms control agreements, including the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty and the Open Skies Treaty. Iran has refused to be completely honest about its past nuclear-weapons programme, remains a WMD proliferation threat and continues to destabilize the Middle East with its support for terrorism and militancy and its development, testing and proliferation of ballistic missiles. On North Korea, while we remain hopeful for

progress on the basis of recent diplomatic engagement, we must maintain pressure on Pyongyang until we achieve the final, fully verified denuclearization of North Korea. This is not an exhaustive list, but rather illustrates some of the major challenges that confront us. And, as daunting and seemingly intractable as those challenges are, they cannot simply be wished away or ignored.

There are some who argue that, by pointing out those challenges, the United States is offering an excuse to delay or abandon further steps on disarmament. It is that line of thinking that leads some to embrace efforts like the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), which is claimed as a silver bullet that can jump-start nuclear disarmament without addressing the security challenges that cause States to rely on nuclear deterrence or engaging in the difficult work that can produce real reductions in nuclear weapons.

Proponents of the TPNW do not offer solutions to those security challenges or even acknowledge that they play a role in States' thinking about deterrence and disarmament. They do not offer a way to verify nuclear disarmament, ensure compliance or even acknowledge the need to address compliance concerns with existing arms-control and disarmament treaties. Instead, they seem to believe that we can skip to the final step of this process — simply banning nuclear weapons — and trust that the details will work themselves out. That flies in the face of decades of experience with nuclear arms control — experience that has produced the dramatic reductions in nuclear weapons that have been achieved over the past half century.

The choice that is being presented by TPNW advocates between doing nothing and pursuing unrealistic hopes for a simpler solution is a false one. Our CCND initiative offers a practical way forward. Progress towards nuclear disarmament and enhancing all States' security is hard but important work, and the stakes are too high to avoid it. We invite all States that truly share those goals to join us in reinvigorating that work by engaging in a realistic dialogue about the world as it is and the steps that we can take to reshape it into the world we would like it to be.

We also support direct dialogue on what can be done to improve security conditions in regional contexts, including the Middle East. We fully support the long-term goal of a Middle East that is free of weapons of mass destruction and delivery systems. However, we

unequivocally reject coercive efforts to use this forum to dictate the terms and modalities for pursuing that long-term goal in a manner that lacks the consensus support of all the States of the region. We urge States of the region to directly engage their neighbours to identify a mutually acceptable vision for advancing dialogue on that issue.

The United States has held to the long-term goal of achieving a world of peace and security without nuclear weapons across many different Administrations. Indeed, United States leadership has been key to the considerable progress that has already been made towards that objective, and we are committed to continuing to work with all States to address the security challenges that we face and create an environment conducive to further progress.

**Mr. Patriota** (Brazil): I wish to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of office in the First Committee. My delegation associates itself with the statements delivered by the representatives of El Salvador, on behalf of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, and of South Africa, on behalf of the New Agenda Coalition (see A/C.1/73/PV.2).

Brazil welcomes the Secretary-General's agenda for disarmament. It offers a pathway for dealing with the uncontrolled flows of conventional weapons that wreak havoc in places where peace and sustainable development are most needed, and it provides a framework for confronting the weaponization of emerging technologies. There are new weapons in the making that are programmed to kill and can self-learn, challenging the laws of humanity and the dictates of public conscience. We must keep them under meaningful human control and prohibit those that do not meet our standards. However, first and foremost, the Secretary-General's view of disarmament saving humankind emphasizes the existential threat that continues to be posed by weapons of mass destruction (WMDs), in particular nuclear weapons. The right tone was struck in calling for responsibility and action to be taken by the States that develop and possess those WMDs, the mere existence of which threatens our very survival.

This year, we celebrate 40 years since the first special session of the General Assembly on disarmament (SSOD-I). Its landmark final document (resolution S-10/2) is still the most important statement of Members of the United Nations on all disarmament matters, and we should heed the solid consensus that

it reflects and the unifying nature of its content as we face the challenges of today. We have made important strides since SSOD-I, but Brazil is particularly proud to have been a proponent of the conference to negotiate a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons, leading towards their total elimination, which adopted the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). It is an honour to have been the first country to sign the Treaty, and our ratification process is under way. The fast pace of new signatures and ratifications has surpassed expectations. The TPNW is an integral part of international law and of the rules-based disarmament regime. It has come to stay and is clearly the most effective measure available, if we are serious about the goal of creating a world free of nuclear weapons.

We note with appreciation that the Conference on Disarmament (CD) has been able to conduct substantive work this year through its subsidiary bodies, whose reports were adopted by consensus. While designing a comprehensive and balanced programme of work remains challenging, we believe that the progress achieved is an important step in that direction. We hope that the Secretary-General will, when delivering his budget outline in appropriate United Nations bodies, be sensitive to the need for strengthened human and budgetary support for the Office for Disarmament Affairs and the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research so that they can meet the increased demand of the CD and other disarmament conventions.

I found the experience of coordinating the subsidiary body on the prevention of an arms race in outer space particularly gratifying, and the fact that there was agreement on its significant report positively reflects on the spirit that prevailed during those deliberations. I hope that we can make further progress to ensure that space exploration evolves peacefully and to the benefit of all on Earth. Brazil has supported the establishment of a group of governmental experts to consider and make recommendations on the elements of an international legally binding instrument on the prevention of an arms race in outer space, which I also have the honour to chair. I will report on the progress of the group during the thematic debate of the Committee.

We reaffirm the crucial role of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the non-proliferation and disarmament regime. It is incumbent on all parties to constructively engage in order to reach a successful outcome for the current

review cycle. Nuclear-weapon States and so-called umbrella countries that are critical of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons need to deepen their engagement with disarmament, under article VI of the NPT, and enhance the implementation of its peaceful uses, demonstrating that they actually have something to contribute to the 2020 review process.

Many of us are frustrated with the failure to convene a conference on the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons in the Middle East. That remains an unfulfilled part of the package agreed in 1995 for the extension of the NPT. We must redress that situation. As a member of the Treaty of Tlatelolco, Brazil will continue to support the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones around the world, and we take pride in having developed, with Argentina, a successful model of regional cooperation and confidence-building, represented by the Brazilian-Argentine Agency for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials.

The entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) is the only binding assurance against the reoccurrence of nuclear testing. We must stop the continued development and modernization of nuclear weapons through subcritical testing and computer simulations, which can be construed as violations of the letter and spirit of the CTBT and a breach of NPT obligations.

The rampant, malicious use of information and communications technologies is a matter of utmost concern. Cyberattacks cannot be condoned, and we can no longer countenance unchecked behaviour in cyberspace without putting our shared values of peace, security, democracy and human rights in peril. We support a clear mandate to carry forward relevant work on cybersecurity in the United Nations through inclusive mechanisms, in a manner that will not preclude different positions from being expressed and considered. Brazil was among the first to sign the Arms Trade Treaty, and we are pleased to announce that our instrument of ratification was deposited in August.

Brazil unequivocally and vehemently condemns the use of chemical weapons by anyone, under any circumstances. We are concerned over the continued reports of chemical weapons use, particularly in the conflict in Syria, but would caution that investigations of violations need to be robust, balanced and impartial. The implementation of a special office for attribution calls for more elaborate discussions concerning its

mandate, structure and working methods ahead of the upcoming Review Conference of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Brazil is encouraged by the latest developments in the dialogue between the United States and North Korea, as well as between North and South Korea, and by the important commitments announced at the Singapore and Panmunjom summits. On the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, Brazil maintains that there is no alternative to a diplomatic, negotiated solution to Iran's nuclear programme, however sensitive or challenging it may be.

Finally, my delegation insists that the best path to strengthening the Biological Weapons Convention is to gradually build up its institutional framework. The establishment of an organization for the Convention and the negotiation of a binding verification regime would provide effective means to deter and counter the threat posed by biological weapons. At this juncture, as we are challenged by the fraying of multilateral commitments, let us seek guidance and inspiration from the SSOD-I final document, which states that political will and the effective functioning of an appropriate international machinery are key to dealing with the problems of disarmament and its various effects. Brazil is always ready to build upon the unifying vision enshrined in that foundational framework agreement.

**Mr. Bermúdez Álvarez** (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I wish to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as Chair of the First Committee, as well as the other members of the Bureau. I wish you every success in your work, in which you, Mr. Chair, can count on the support of my delegation.

Uruguay aligns itself with the statement delivered earlier in this meeting by the representative of El Salvador on behalf of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States.

Uruguay, a peace-loving country that is committed to defending international peace and security, supports the strengthening of the disarmament and non-proliferation regime, including the total elimination of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, and arms control. The mere existence of nuclear weapons poses an unthinkable risk to the security and survival of all humankind. We advocate the total, irreversible, verifiable and transparent elimination of nuclear weapons, without preconditions or reservations and within a multilaterally agreed time

frame. It is our belief that no rationale can justify the transfer, threat of use or use of nuclear weapons and that, in that regard, States should eliminate nuclear weapons from their doctrines, security policies and military strategies.

We are concerned about the deadlock regarding compliance with the obligations set forth in article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and that some countries could be developing new weapons systems or have announced their readiness to do so. We urge the nuclear-weapon States that are parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons to redouble their efforts to reduce their nuclear arsenals.

We regret that the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty has not yet entered into force. We call on annex 2 States, whose ratification is necessary for its entry into force, to sign and/or ratify the Treaty without further delay. We emphasize the importance of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

The instrument should be seen not as an obstacle to fulfilling the objective of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, but as an instrument that complements and reinforces its design. We therefore urge all States to consider signing or ratifying it.

Over the years, Uruguay has consistently practised what it has preached. Among other international instruments, it is a State party to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, having deposited its instrument of ratification on 25 July, as well as a party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean, known as the Treaty of Tlatelolco. Uruguay was also elected a member of the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean for the period 2018-2021.

For Uruguay, the total elimination of chemical and biological weapons is also a priority on the disarmament and non-proliferation agenda. The use of those weapons constitutes a serious violation of international humanitarian law that we cannot support. We emphasize the importance of effectively fulfilling the obligations emanating from the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their



Destruction, and we highlight the verification and control activities of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. In that same vein, it is necessary to fully respect the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction. We urge States with such weapons to comply with the obligations stipulated in the aforementioned conventions, including by eliminating their arsenals and ensuring that their internal regulations reflect their international obligations.

Uruguay is a State party to the Arms Trade Treaty. We advocate the universalization of the Treaty and urge all countries to consider signing or ratifying it without delay. Together and in synergy with the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects; the Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition; and the International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons, the international community has been developing valuable tools whose universalization and effective implementation are critical to attaining the ultimate goal of achieving nothing less than the security, well-being and peaceful coexistence of our societies, while safeguarding the lives and human rights of their inhabitants.

We also recall that the cost in terms of loss of human life in armed conflict is alarmingly high, with the main victims being civilians, in particular women and children. With regard to the use of explosives, we call on States to refrain from using such weapons in populated centres, as that would lower the number of deaths and injuries and ease the psychological impact among the civilian population, which is often irreversible, in addition to the resulting material destruction that hampers reconstruction efforts.

We recognize the sovereign right of every State, in accordance with its domestic legal system, to regulate and control conventional weapons on its territory, as well as its legitimate political, economic, commercial and security interests concerning the international trade in conventional weapons. However, we believe that States that produce and sell weapons have a responsibility to be particularly stringent in dealing with the different aspects related to the production, accumulation, storage and protection of such weapons. Controlling access to

weapons is even more important when we bear in mind that terrorist groups, which are supported by their links to international crime, acquire and use conventional weapons, and that there is a real threat of weapons of mass destruction falling into their hands.

We defend the right to conduct research and scientific and technological development and to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, based on transparency, safeguards and compliance with internationally accepted security levels. We highlight the role played by the International Atomic Energy Agency and its work in the area of technical cooperation and the transfer of technology for peaceful purposes. Uruguay is honoured to have been elected to its Board of Governors for the 2018-2020 term.

In conclusion, Member States have a duty to redouble their efforts to continue advancing towards the final goal of general and complete disarmament, under strict and effective international control. We must not waste the opportunities for negotiation that may arise in the future. The 2020 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons will give us the opportunity to progress in a vital area of the disarmament agenda. In the meantime, we must promote transparency and foster mutual trust, paving the way towards the conduct of negotiations in good faith and with mutual respect, based on the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. That is the only way we can move towards a more stable and secure world, freeing up resources from the arms industry for the development and well-being of our societies.

**Mr. Hwang** (France) (*spoke in French*): My delegation congratulates you, Sir, on your election as Chair of the First Committee, and wishes you every success.

France aligns itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union (see A/C.1/73/PV.2) and would like to deliver some additional remarks in a national capacity.

France is not resigned to the continued deterioration of the international security environment. The international community is facing a more unpredictable, complex and threatening strategic environment, and it is up to us to address it. The threat posed by the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery is greater than ever.

It is unacceptable that we must condemn further chemical weapons use in Syria this year. The use of those deadly weapons has been ongoing since 2012, and the attack that took place in Douma in eastern Ghouta on 7 April was yet another cruel reminder of that. There is no doubt as to the responsibility of the Syrian security and armed forces for that attack. The Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction (CWC) continues to be violated by Syria. The draft resolution that will once again be discussed this year in the First Committee needs to be firm and recall the fundamental principle of the prohibition of the use of chemical weapons. As the French President said last week, we will not accept any further use of chemical weapons in Syria.

It is also unacceptable that a nerve agent was used in the United Kingdom, in Salisbury on 4 March and in Amesbury on 30 June. The results of the British investigation, alongside those of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, confirm the use of Novichok, developed by Russia. Such actions violate international law, seriously harm our system of collective security and flout all principles of cooperation and mutual respect. I commend the transparency of the British authorities throughout the investigation.

Resigning ourselves to the current situation and observing with regret the deadlock among the institutions that should have been able to bring an end to the Syrian crisis are not an option. The need to take action against those committing such crimes led to the creation of the International Partnership against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons, in Paris on 23 January. The Partnership, which brings together 39 States, is open to all countries wishing to join it. The fourth special session of the Conference of the States Parties to the CWC in June led to the adoption of an important decision to address the threat of the use of chemical weapons, which constitutes an important sign of deterrence.

France continues to firmly support the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). The agreement, which was concluded in July 2015, has shown that dialogue can achieve concrete and effective results in non-proliferation. It was with regret and concern that France, along with Germany and the United Kingdom, learned of the decision of the United States to begin its withdrawal from the JCPOA. France reiterates its continued commitment to the agreement, which was

unanimously approved by the Security Council through resolution 2231 (2015). Iran must rigorously respect all provisions of the agreement in the long term. We encourage Iran to exercise restraint in its response to the American decision. France is also concerned about the rapid development of Iran's ballistic programme.

France acknowledges the declaration of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea announcing the suspension of its nuclear tests and ballistic-missile launches, as well as the closure of its nuclear testing site. The commitments made by North Korea at the three summits must be quickly followed by concrete and verifiable actions. We remain fully vigilant. No one will forget North Korea's past violations of the non-proliferation regime. Any progress in negotiations will make sense only if it leads to the complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization of North Korea. France will ensure that the review cycle of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) continues to prioritize settling this crisis, as it did on 4 May in Geneva by putting forward a declaration supported by 63 States parties.

Beyond those proliferation issues, the importance of overall international balance must be highlighted. Ignorance of current threats and the deterioration of our strategic environment led to the negotiation of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons on 7 July 2017. As the Committee is aware, France did not take part in those negotiations and does not intend to accede to the Treaty. The Treaty is not binding on us and does not create new obligations for us. For France and for many other States of Europe and, in particular, Asia, nuclear deterrence continues to play a role in maintaining regional and international stability and security. The new Treaty will never change that. It is fraught with risks and undermines the credibility of the non-proliferation regime. It establishes a norm that competes with the NPT and undermines international verification standards.

France welcomes the fact that the meeting of States parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction in December 2017 led to the agreement on an intersessional programme of work. We cannot run the risk of weakening the biological non-proliferation standards and compliance with them in the long term. In another encouraging sign, France welcomes the work carried out within the five subsidiary

bodies of the Conference on Disarmament (CD) and the adoption of four very substantial reports. Finally, sustainable solutions should be sought for funding difficulties, while ensuring respect for multilingualism.

Several major upcoming events mean that we need to advance together. The meeting of the third NPT Preparatory Committee in spring 2019 will need to enable progress in the full and balanced implementation of the three pillars of the non-proliferation regime. As has already been concretely shown by taking tangible and substantial nuclear disarmament measures, France remains committed to the objective of a world without nuclear weapons, when the situation allows, with undiminished security for all.

My country will continue working determinedly for the implementation of the next key steps in nuclear disarmament: continued efforts to reduce American and Russian arsenals, the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, the launch of negotiations in the CD for a fissile material cut-off treaty on the basis of the Shannon mandate and work on nuclear disarmament verification. It is essential to preserve the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty in Europe. Similarly, we will continue to encourage the United States and Russia to preserve the New START Treaty until 2021, renew it until 2026 and immediately begin talks on a subsequent treaty.

Our resolve to progress on the path to disarmament and to fight the spread of conventional arms must be renewed. The Arms Trade Treaty will be able to achieve its goals only if it becomes truly global. The Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons remains a major forum in which to discuss lethal autonomous weapons systems and improvised explosive devices. Furthermore, France is particularly proud to have presided over 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 in June. That meeting helped to remobilize States against the scourge of small arms and light weapons proliferation.

In a rapidly changing world, the civilian and military uses of space and cyberspace are increasing. We cannot accept the differing approaches among countries. In that regard, within the framework of the Paris Peace Forum and the Internet Governance Forum,

France will launch a major initiative, the Paris Call for Trust and Security in Cyberspace.

To conclude, the seventy-third session of the First Committee is once again being held in a difficult context. Our experience, however, has shown us that, through serious good-faith efforts towards negotiation, progress can be made to strengthen the architecture of law and collective security.

**Mr. Molnar** (Hungary): Let me join previous speakers in congratulating you, Sir, on your election, and assuring you of my delegation's full support.

Hungary associates itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union (see A/C.1/73/PV.2). Therefore, I will make only a few remarks from our national perspective.

Hungary has always been of the view that disarmament and non-proliferation are part and parcel of the international security architecture. Consequently, in this field lasting results can be achieved only if our respective efforts also strengthen international security and stability. We note in that respect that the Secretary-General, in his *Securing Our Common Future: An Agenda for Disarmament*, recognizes the complexity, instability and unpredictability of the current security environment and acknowledges that disarmament must contribute to the creation of a safer and more secure world.

The most obvious area where the strategic security context must be taken into consideration is nuclear disarmament. Consequently, we need to underline that during the almost five decades of its existence, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) has proved to be not only the cornerstone of the global nuclear non-proliferation regime but also, through its article VI, the only realistic framework for multilateral nuclear disarmament. Therefore, in marking the fiftieth anniversary of the NPT, the current review cycle must preserve and reinforce the integrity of the Treaty.

Since there are differing positions on nuclear disarmament, we must focus on areas where there is common ground. There is no fast-track solution to the issue. Only an inclusive and incremental process that is based on concrete and practical steps and engages nuclear-weapon States can produce tangible results. An indispensable, though still missing, building block of

such an incremental approach is the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT).

With its reliable and highly accurate International Monitoring System, the CTBT is a unique asset. Its efficacy has been proved yet again by the System's detection of nuclear tests carried out by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Consequently, the CTBT is more relevant and its entry into force is needed more than ever, as reiterated by Security Council resolution 2310 (2016). We therefore attach great importance to promoting its universalization and convincing all remaining annex 2 States to ratify the Treaty. In that context, we welcome Thailand's ratification and Tuvalu's signature of the CTBT.

Another concrete step towards a world free of nuclear weapons would be a ban on the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. Therefore, Hungary welcomes the report (see A/73/159) of the high-level fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT) expert preparatory group, which contains a set of potential treaty elements that would facilitate the task of future negotiators. We also support the group's recommendation that FMCT negotiations should begin without further delay in the Conference on Disarmament.

Yet another essential element of the incremental approach is the development of effective and reliable verification and monitoring mechanisms and instruments. We share the view that nuclear-weapon States and non-nuclear-weapon States should work together to create such a verification toolbox. Therefore, Hungary is honoured to participate in the work of the Group of Governmental Experts set up by the General Assembly to consider the role of verification in advancing nuclear disarmament. We are also actively involved in the work of the International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification, focusing on technical aspects and capacity-building for verification.

Hungary welcomes the slow but promising developments on the Korean peninsula, in which the united and resolute stance of the international community has played an essential role. Nevertheless, the nuclear and ballistic missile programmes of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea remain a grave concern. Until the Democratic People's Republic of Korea takes concrete steps towards complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization, sanctions must therefore be maintained and strictly enforced.

Hungary fully supports the aim of the international community to ensure that the nuclear programme of the Islamic Republic of Iran remains on a peaceful path. We believe that the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action continues to serve as the best possible means for obtaining assurances of the exclusively peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear programme, while providing tangible economic benefits to the Iranian people.

Hungary fully shares the concern that the illicit trade in, and misuse of, small arms and light weapons and their ammunition continue to pose a serious threat to international peace and security and to sustainable development. The United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects is one of the most important efforts to combat those threats. Hungary welcomes the progressive and ambitious outcome document (A/CONF.192/2018/RC.3, annex) adopted by the third United Nations Conference to Review Progress Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action, held in June. Although we still have a long way to go, the outcome document clearly highlights the path that we need to take over the next six years to achieve our goals.

As far as the Arms Trade Treaty is concerned, effective implementation and universalization remain crucial for advancing the purpose of the Treaty. Hungary welcomes the progress made in the development of national control systems and relevant capacity-building. We are also pleased with the pace of universalization. However, as long as key players whose participation would make a qualitative difference remain outside its scope, the impact and efficiency of the Treaty can be only limited. We also need to build more on the mutually reinforcing impact of, and create and reinforce synergies with, the relevant international and regional organizations and mechanisms, such as the Programme of Action on Small Arms.

This year has been distressing and a breaking point concerning the use of chemical weapons in various parts of the world. The continued violation of the Chemical Weapons Convention must be a matter of grave concern to the whole international community. Hungary condemns any use of such weapons, including the use of any toxic chemicals as weapons. We believe that those responsible must be held accountable. Therefore, we consider the recent decision of the fourth special session of the Conference of the States Parties to the Convention to enhance the capacity of the Organization

for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons to identify perpetrators of the use of chemical weapons universally as a huge step forward. It is against that backdrop that we prepare for the fourth Review Conference and expect that it will take the necessary decisions to strengthen the implementation of the Convention.

Last, but not least, let me remind delegations that Hungary, following the practice of previous years, has prepared a draft resolution on the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction, a fundamental pillar of the international community's effort against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Substantive changes in the draft resolution reflect progress made in the universalization of the Convention and the decisions taken by the last meeting of States parties concerning the intersessional process for the period before the next Review Conference, as well as financial matters. We trust that, as has been the case so far, the draft resolution will again be adopted by consensus.

**Mrs. Rodríguez Camejo** (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): We congratulate you, Sir, and the other members of the Bureau on your election and we wish you success in the work of the First Committee.

We align ourselves with the statements delivered by the representatives of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/73/PV.2) and of El Salvador on behalf of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States.

Seventy-three years after the criminal bombings against Hiroshima and Nagasaki, there are still approximately 14,400 nuclear weapons in the world, of which 3,750 are deployed and 2,000 are operationally alert. Cuba reiterates its deep concern about the mere existence of nuclear weapons. It is extremely dangerous that the nuclear-weapon States have strengthened the role of those weapons in their military doctrines and lowered the threshold for considering the use of nuclear weapons, including in response to so-called non-nuclear strategic threats.

Cuba reiterates that military positions and doctrines based on nuclear deterrence are unjustifiable and contrary to the obligations assumed under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. As Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel Bermúdez stated in his first speech before the General Assembly in September:

“it is a fact that the military and nuclear hegemony not only continues but is extending its reach, dashing the hopes of the majority of peoples for general and complete disarmament. Cuba shares that ideal” (A/73/PV.8, p. 32).

It is alarming that, in what constitutes an accelerated and qualitative vertical proliferation, millions and millions of dollars are invested every year in the industry of war, existing nuclear arsenals are modernized and new nuclear weapons systems are developed, instead of those vast resources being allocated to implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the fight against hunger and poverty. We hope that the nuclear-weapon States are able to regain and demonstrate their political will and responsibility for the goal of nuclear disarmament as we commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the Non-Proliferation Treaty this year.

As the fifth State to ratify the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, Cuba will continue to ensure the implementation of the Treaty, which prohibits the use, existence and development of nuclear weapons and reaffirms that they are inhuman, immoral and ethically indefensible, as well as complementing it with effective measures that lead to the total elimination of those arsenals in an effective, transparent and irreversible manner.

We will also continue to promote the annual high-level meetings of the General Assembly to commemorate and promote the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons. Cuba supports the actions outlined in the Secretary-General's agenda for disarmament to promote the goal of nuclear disarmament and secure its recognition as the highest priority in the field of disarmament.

We join the majority in rejecting the decision of the United States Government to withdraw from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, or nuclear agreement, with the Islamic Republic of Iran. We welcome the process of inter-Korean rapprochement and dialogue, which is the way to achieve lasting peace, reconciliation and stability on the Korean peninsula.

Cuba supports the prohibition and total elimination of weapons of mass destruction as the only effective guarantee to prevent their acquisition and use, including by terrorists. Our country firmly rejects the use of any weapon of mass destruction by any actor and under any circumstances. Cuba strictly complies

with the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological Weapons Convention and is convinced of the importance of preserving them. We reject selective, non-transparent and politically motivated approaches to the implementation of those international instruments, as well as any distorted interpretation of the Chemical Weapons Convention and the creation of mechanisms and procedures outside its scope.

With regard to the Biological Weapons Convention, Cuba reiterates that it is essential to adopt a legally binding protocol that strengthens it and forever excludes the possible use of those weapons. All limitations and restrictions that hamper the broadest exchange, particularly with developing countries, of materials, equipment and technology for nuclear, chemical and biological activities for peaceful purposes, consistent with the relevant international treaties, must cease. We reiterate our strong condemnation of the imposition of unilateral and unjust sanctions.

In an international environment that is characterized by a rise in warmongering and aggressive rhetoric, by the use and threat of use of force and by the imposition of sanctions and unilateral coercive measures, the heightened global military expenditure amounting to \$1.74 trillion is cause for concern and distrust. The illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, an international scourge that affects most of the regions and countries of the world, is also alarming. In that regard, Cuba reiterates its commitment to continuing to implement 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 final documents of its Review Conferences.

With regard to conventional weapons, Cuba supports the initiation of negotiations on a legally binding instrument prohibiting autonomous lethal weapons or killer robots and on regulations for military attack drones, for which the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons would be the ideal forum.

Cuba reiterates its rejection of the militarization of outer space and cyberspace and of the covert and illegal use of information and communication technologies to attack other States. Committed to its strong principles, Cuba will continue to defend multilateralism in negotiations on disarmament and non-proliferation and to demand respect for the Charter of the United Nations and the proclamation of Latin America and the Caribbean as a zone of peace.

**Mr. Omarov** (Kazakhstan): Allow me to first congratulate you, Sir, on assuming the chairmanship of the First Committee, and the members of the Bureau for their election. We extend our best wishes to you, Mr. Chair, in fulfilling your important mandate and you can count on the support of our delegation.

Disarmament is a critical component of peace, stability and security on our planet. Some believe that the establishment of peace is the primary condition for nuclear disarmament, while others maintain that nuclear disarmament is a *sine qua non* for achieving global peace. Our vision is that disarmament and peace should and can be pursued in parallel, on the basis of mutual trust. Disputes among countries cannot and should not be resolved by military means and that remains hugely relevant in our time.

We are living today in difficult global security conditions, in which the global Powers are again relying on strength and striving for supremacy. In such conditions, we are increasingly undoing the achievements of the past century in building a sustainable long-term system for global security and stability. How can countries contribute to the global security architecture when its main pillars are jeopardized by the increasing resolve of world Powers to resort to confrontation and preparation for a protracted global war?

The idea of eradicating war and conflict is the core of President Nursultan Nazarbayev's *Manifesto: The World. The 21st Century*. He has been tirelessly warning world leaders that our planet is now on the brink of a new Cold War that threatens the achievements of the past four decades of confidence-building measures. With that in mind, during its presidency of the Security Council, Kazakhstan convened a special high-level thematic briefing on 18 January on the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) and confidence-building measures (see S/PV.8160).

President Nazarbayev stated that nuclear bombs and rockets do not possess real power. True protection is provided through the trust of the international community. Indeed, confidence-building measures have succeeded over the past century in stopping the arms race and preventing a nuclear catastrophe. The world expects the nuclear Powers today to follow the visionary example already set, which has not, unfortunately, been fully realized and acknowledged. We must find a way to restore political trust and systemic dialogue in international affairs.

The ongoing positive developments on the Korean peninsula prove the relevance and importance of that approach. Kazakhstan has steadfastly advocated for the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula and is ready to share its time-tested and well-proven practical experience. The entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) would be another example of mutual trust and confidence. An overwhelming majority of the world's community have demonstrated their trust and goodwill by signing and ratifying the Treaty. The same resolute actions are required on the part of the remaining States, whose ratification is needed for the entry into force of the CTBT. In that regard, the Secretary-General's agenda for disarmament is very valuable, because it was developed in the context of complex geopolitical realities and is being presented against the backdrop of unstable worldwide international security. It reaffirms the United Nations strong commitment to the cause of disarmament.

Nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation are among the main priorities of Kazakhstan's foreign policy. Our country has come a long way as a champion of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, having once been home to the world's fourth biggest nuclear arsenal and one of the world's largest nuclear testing sites, based in Semipalatinsk. Kazakhstan will continue to take practical steps towards achieving a world free of nuclear threats.

President Nazarbayev has once again urged the international community to build a world without nuclear weapons by 2045, the United Nations centenary. Even though we have more than 20 years to go, unless concrete and concerted actions are taken it will be very difficult to achieve that goal. We have already wasted decades and have not, unfortunately, achieved any practical progress in implementing article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. That was the reason for last year's multilateral negotiation process, resulting in the adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. Kazakhstan signed the Treaty in March and we plan to ratify it soon.

As one of the means to achieving the goal of building a world free of nuclear weapons, Kazakhstan initiated the adoption three years ago of resolution 70/57, on the Universal Declaration on the Achievement of a Nuclear-Weapon-Free World. We plan to reintroduce a draft

resolution on the issue this year and seek the valuable support of Member States in that regard.

Consolidating the efforts of nuclear-weapon-free zones will be another priority task for Kazakhstan during this session. On the margins of the First Committee, Kazakhstan will organize a meeting of the nuclear discussion forum on 18 October to discuss ways to strengthen interaction among zones. Moreover, my President proposed last year to unite all nuclear-weapon-free zones in order to provide new impetus and expand such zones throughout the world. We also propose to convene high-level inter-zone meetings on a regular and frequent basis and Astana is open to hosting the first such meeting.

The Central Asian States, which comprise the only nuclear-weapon-free zone in the northern hemisphere, are strongly committed to further institutionalizing the Semipalatinsk Treaty. We look forward to ratification by the United States of the protocol on negative security assurances of the Treaty. The convening of a conference on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other WMDs remains one of our current challenges. It is essential that we make every effort to create nuclear-weapon-free zones all over the world, including the Middle East, North-East Asia, Europe and the Arctic.

Regarding the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, Kazakhstan advocates the preservation and further unfailing implementation of the agreement, for which we do not see an alternative. Notwithstanding the evident complications related to the obligations of some parties to the agreement, we hope for its further implementation. Given the criticism of a considerably weakened non-proliferation regime in Syria, Kazakhstan is firmly convinced that the Security Council will be able to find a comprehensive solution to the issues of attribution and prosecution without transferring such prerogatives to other structures and subjecting them to further polarization and politicization. In terms of new trends, we have to tackle the frontier issues. New types of weapons and new technologies can pose an even greater threat if they are combined with nuclear weapons.

Finally, let me join the appeal made by others that humankind mobilize every opportunity to carry forward the momentum and generate new impetus for disarmament in order to achieve a safer and more secure world for all.

**Mr. McConville** (Australia): I congratulate you, Sir, on your election as Chair. Please be assured of my delegation's strong support for your work.

Our shared goal remains a world in which people can live in peace, security and prosperity. Global tensions and regional conflicts remain of deep concern, while other challenges such as terrorism and malicious cyber incidents contribute to a deteriorating international security environment.

Australia remains deeply concerned at further violations of the Chemical Weapons Convention. We must do more to defend that key international norm. Australia calls on all States parties to strongly support the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons in establishing an attribution mechanism for Syria and developing a global attribution capacity. Such mechanisms send a clear message — that users of chemical weapons will be held to account. Identifying perpetrators is a crucial, necessary step, as is potentially deterring others who might consider using such reprehensible weapons. We remain committed to strengthening the Biological Weapons Convention and welcome the constructive discussions and ideas generated during the series of expert meetings held in August.

Australia remains committed to the ultimate goal of a world without nuclear weapons. In a more complex and uncertain security environment, disarmament is more difficult yet no less necessary. We remain convinced that patience, pragmatism and practicality — a progressive approach — are the most sustainable and realistic way forward. Progress requires painstaking efforts on disarmament verification, a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons, increased transparency and other risk reduction measures, and strengthened norms against nuclear testing through the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). We encourage States to sponsor this year's CTBT draft resolution, which we are facilitating with our partners Mexico and New Zealand.

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) continues to deliver. It enables access to nuclear technology for peaceful purposes, constrains nuclear proliferation and provides the framework for nuclear disarmament. The 2020 Review Conference, marking the Treaty's first half-century in force, is a golden opportunity to reflect on the past and how we

can strengthen future implementation. Our common interests in strengthening the NPT greatly outweigh our differences. With our cross-regional partners in the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative, Australia looks forward to developing a convergence of views for the 2020 NPT Review Conference.

We welcome the significant efforts undertaken this year to advance dialogue on the nuclear programme of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. We look forward to those efforts yielding positive, concrete results.

Turning to Iran, we would like the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action to remain in effect and call on Iran and all remaining parties to remain in compliance. It is in our collective interests that controls on Iran's nuclear programme remain in place.

Regarding conventional weapons, a key Australian focus is to strengthen the implementation and universalization of important treaties, including the Arms Trade Treaty, particularly in our Asia-Pacific region. In the coming years, emerging technologies will present new challenges. That is why we value global conversations on lethal autonomous weapons systems and small arms and light weapons.

The scourge of terrorism remains a global challenge. While Da'esh has lost almost all the territory it once held, it retains fighters capable of waging an insurgency and its ability to inspire attacks has implications for our region's security. A multifaceted approach is required to tackle that challenge, which should begin by addressing the drivers of violent extremism.

Australia's economic and security interests in outer space are expanding on the basis of our increasing space-based and space-enabled capabilities. We are committed to strengthening the norms of responsible behaviour and the international rules and laws for outer space.

Australia is working with international partners to reinforce the rules-based order in cyberspace and strongly supports the continuation of expert discussion at the United Nations on international cyber issues. The Group of Governmental Experts on Developments in the Field of Information and Telecommunications in the Context of International Security was the forum to first agree that existing international law and norms of responsible State behaviour apply in cyberspace. It is vital that those discussions continue. Australia calls



on all countries to work constructively to promote and protect a peaceful and stable online environment, on which we all ultimately depend.

We welcome the increased use this year of disarmament forums for important substantive discussions on a range of issues, including nuclear risk reduction. This year Australia was pleased to have chaired the Disarmament Commission, which laid the groundwork for a consensus 2020 outcome. Australia champions the full participation of women and men alike in international security forums. The Secretary-General's agenda for disarmament is a useful initiative, providing a broad menu of options for consideration and underlining the importance of dialogue and trust-building.

In conclusion, across those fields, Australia remains committed to playing its part by working constructively and collaboratively towards our shared goal of enhancing global security and stability through the Committee's important work.

**Mr. Sukhee** (Mongolia): As this is my first time addressing the First Committee, I wish to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the chairmanship of the Committee and the other members of the Bureau on their elections. I am confident that the Committee will hold productive deliberations under your able leadership. I assure you of my delegation's full support and cooperation.

While we align ourselves with the statement made by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/73/PV.2), I would like to make a few comments in my national capacity.

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is the cornerstone of the nuclear non-proliferation regime and nuclear disarmament. We need to continue to make efforts to ensure full adherence to the obligations established by the NPT and the outcome documents of its review conferences. In that regard, the current review cycle of the NPT provides an opportunity to make headway towards nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

The adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in July last year marked a significant milestone in prohibiting nuclear weapons, leading towards their total elimination. That legally binding document is complementary and a political

reinforcement of the NPT and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. It is therefore crucial that we continue to actively engage in bringing into force legally binding prohibitions against all nuclear tests and adopting a fissile material cut-off treaty.

The dismal failure of the Conference on Disarmament (CD) to adopt a programme of work continues to diminish its credibility. We believe that the CD's shortcomings fundamentally lie in incompatible differences among its member States. Though acutely aware that members of the CD cannot help but have differences, we believe that those differences, while all too real and important, cannot be allowed to continue to hinder progress in the body. It needs to be noted that there was a glimpse of hope in the CD this year. Through the establishment of five subsidiary bodies in February, the CD engaged in substantive discussions for the first time in over 20 years. We hope that the subsidiary bodies will be re-established next year. It is important that the CD advance technical discussions until the adoption of its programme of work. However, we need to bear in mind that the decision to establish subsidiary bodies to engage in substantive discussions shall not replace a programme of work, but instead facilitate its adoption.

Mongolia's two-decade experience of having nuclear-weapon-free status demonstrates that the status is one of the most effective means of ensuring the national security of States. Our internationally recognized status contributes to enhancing stability and confidence-building in the region. Mongolia has offered to serve as coordinator of the fourth Conference of States Parties and Signatories to Treaties that Establish Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones and Mongolia, which will be held in New York, in conjunction with the NPT Review Conference in 2020.

Mongolia has always been committed to making a contribution to maintaining international peace and security in all parts of the world, in particular North-East Asia. This year, the international community witnessed several summits, including the inter-Korean summits, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea-China summit meetings and the United States-Democratic People's Republic of Korea summit, which inspire our hope that sustainable peace and verifiable denuclearization will prevail on the Korean peninsula.

Since the early 2000s, Mongolia has pursued a policy of engaging with and addressing the isolation of

the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The recent positive developments on the Korean peninsula have justified the effectiveness of that policy. We welcome the historic summits and believe that all relevant parties should keep up the momentum of dialogue and open discussions and swiftly implement all agreed actions in order to build a lasting and robust peace regime in the region.

In the context of failed Six-Party Talks and the absence of channels of communication in North-East Asia, in 2014 Mongolia initiated the Ulaanbaatar Dialogue on Northeast Asian Security to promote trust in the region, facilitate the exchange of ideas and find solutions to common concerns. Last June, we organized its fifth international conference, which focused on ways forward to solidify the recent positive developments and share views on the short- and long-term prospects of the security environment in the region.

Before I conclude, allow me to say that my Government is planning to accede to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. I wish to announce that at this session our delegation will introduce to the First Committee a draft resolution entitled "Mongolia's international security and nuclear-weapon-free status". It is our hope that, as in previous years, the draft resolution will be adopted with unanimous support.

**Mr. Kellerman** (South Africa): Allow me to join others in congratulating you, Sir, on your election as Chair of the First Committee this year and assure you of our full support and cooperation under your capable stewardship.

Let me also say that South Africa associates itself with the statements delivered on behalf of the Group of African States, the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and the New Agenda Coalition (see A/C.1/73/PV.2).

As we convene another First Committee session, it is incumbent on us to reflect on the progress that we have made, as well as the areas in which we have fallen short. Once again, my delegation regrets that the action in the Conference on Disarmament (CD) this year did not meet the expectations for an end to the protracted impasse. While South Africa remains committed to a functioning Conference on Disarmament, it is regrettable that even though we have a body that is mandated to negotiate multilateral disarmament instruments, it has not discharged its basic mandate for the past 22 years. We therefore urgently need to attend

to the current state of the CD. We believe that we can no longer engage in past repetitive activities that have not brought the Conference closer to an agreement on a programme of work, but rather have distracted the CD from reaching consensus on a programme of work and starting negotiations, all the while creating the illusion that substantive work is taking place. We therefore call on Member States to show increased flexibility and a willingness to move beyond narrow interests to ensure progress in the CD.

The current review cycle of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), which coincides with the fiftieth anniversary of the Treaty, presents an opportunity to make progress on nuclear disarmament. In that regard, we emphasize the value of a constructive and successful preparatory process, leading to the 2020 Review Conference, in order to strengthen the Treaty and make progress towards its full implementation and universality. Likewise, at this critical juncture it is important that any future outcome does not roll back or reinterpret the agreements reached during the 1995 and 2000 Review Conferences and further reaffirmed by the 2010 Review Conference, which constitute, in our view, nuclear disarmament benchmarks.

It is my delegation's strong conviction that the vitality and relevance of the Treaty, as the foundation of the nuclear non-proliferation regime, is dependent on the extent to which State parties implement their obligations and commitments. In that regard, article VI of the Treaty makes it clear that nuclear disarmament is an obligation on all States parties. It is therefore a shared responsibility of all States to prevent any use of nuclear weapons, curb their proliferation and achieve nuclear disarmament. As we pay tribute to the late former Secretary-General Kofi Annan, we are reminded of his words when he said:

"We cannot choose between non-proliferation and disarmament. We must tackle both tasks with the urgency that they demand."

South Africa therefore calls for the full implementation of all NPT commitments and obligations in order to enhance the good standing of the Treaty.

A year after the adoption of the landmark Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), we reaffirm our commitment to that historic milestone for nuclear disarmament, and we encourage States that have not yet done so, to sign and ratify the Treaty to ensure

its early entry into force. The TPNW and the NPT are compatible and, indeed, complementary. After all, both share the same goal at their core — the abolition of nuclear weapons. Additionally, the TPNW provides the opportunity for those States that are not located in nuclear-weapon-free zones to join an instrument that expresses total opposition to nuclear weapons. While the TPNW is not the final word on nuclear weapons, it nevertheless remains a critical step in the evolution of the regime that would be required to achieve and eventually maintain a world without those weapons. I am happy to say that South Africa's ratification process is expected to be completed in the very near future.

In the area of chemical weapons, South Africa reaffirms its commitment to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and believes that the States parties to the CWC should be united in preserving the international norm against chemical weapons, strict adherence to the provisions of the Convention and its consistent and non-discriminatory implementation. In that regard, we reiterate the importance of the work of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and emphasize the need for the Organization to carry out its mandate without interference, ensuring its impartiality as the only technically competent international authority in this area.

As a State party to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, we look forward to the forthcoming 17th Meeting of States Parties. However, we remain concerned at reports of the rising number of victims of anti-personnel mines, improvised explosive devices, unexploded ordnance and other explosive remnants of war. We therefore encourage those States that have not yet done so, particularly those possessing such weapons, to join the relevant instruments without delay. We further call on those States in a position to do so to assist requesting States in their national implementation efforts and provide assistance to the victims of those weapons.

South Africa firmly believes that the full and effective implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty will tangibly contribute to promoting international and regional peace, security and stability, as well as socioeconomic development. In that regard, we welcome the outcome of the fourth Conference of States Parties to the Treaty.

It is against that backdrop that my delegation stands ready to actively participate in the work of this year's

First Committee and invites other delegations to support the realization of positive outcomes at this session.

**Mr. Arriola Ramírez** (Paraguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): I have the honour to make this statement on behalf of the delegation of the Republic of Paraguay.

We congratulate you, Sir, on your election as Chair of the Committee, as well as the other members of the Bureau. You can be assured of my delegation's commitment to collaborating in order to ensure the successful work of the Committee at the current session.

The Republic of Paraguay reaffirms its commitment to fulfilling the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and its conviction that matters related to disarmament and non-proliferation in all their manifestations, including international cooperation to promote them, should continue to be debated within the General Assembly — which is the strongest democratic expression of the peoples it comprises — on the basis of sovereign equality among States. Paraguay values the voices of women and men, international, regional and subregional organizations, non-governmental organizations, civil society and the academic world that contribute to discussions on peace and security, disarmament and non-proliferation and respect for the principles of international law, international human rights law and international humanitarian law.

The delegation of Paraguay will continue to foster disarmament and non-proliferation initiatives within the United Nations, in accordance with international law, and in particular international human rights law and international humanitarian law. In that regard, we urge all actors of the international community to step up their efforts for successful multilateral initiatives, negotiations and debates on international disarmament, non-proliferation and security. We reiterate that bilateral negotiations can never replace multilateral negotiations in that regard. The Republic of Paraguay rejects unilateral actions carried out by any actor in the international community that are aimed at undermining multilateral negotiations, infringing the provisions of the Charter or diminishing the principles of international law.

The Republic of Paraguay adheres to the principles guiding the exploration and use of outer space for peaceful purposes, to the benefit of all humankind; condemns the use and threat of use of force in international relations; strives for the prevention of an arms race in outer space, including, *inter alia*, the

installation of weapons in space; and highlights the need to guarantee international responsibility for damage caused by space activities and to continue working to devise an appropriate legal regime for that purpose. In that conviction, the Republic of Paraguay has applied for membership of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space.

The development of science and technology, access to information and communications and their use must be consistent with human rights, in their broadest sense, and fundamental freedoms; contribute to maintaining international stability and security; foster cooperation and friendly relations among States, while respecting their national sovereignty; and be protected from criminal or terrorist uses. The delegation of Paraguay underlines the importance of international cooperation for the effective and efficient implementation of mechanisms and policies on the prevention of threats to and attacks on cyberspace. At this session, we are prepared to support the adoption of multilateral instruments that will regulate advances in information and telecommunications in the context of international security, provided that they foresee, among other things, the reduction of the technology gap between developed and developing countries.

With regard to nuclear disarmament, the Republic of Paraguay reiterates its commitment to the provisions of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. Based on its conviction that the prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons are necessary to promote international peace and security, Paraguay continues to comply with its constitutional requirements, which were crucial to the ultimate adoption and ratification of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, of which it was one of the first signatory States.

The nuclear disarmament process must be transparent and irreversible, provide for effective verification mechanisms and be based on a universal and legally binding framework. The delegation of Paraguay welcomes the suspension of nuclear tests on and the beginning of talks towards the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula. However, we express our concern about practices aimed at improving existing nuclear weapons and developing new ones. In that regard, the delegation of Paraguay emphasizes the need to transfer resources allocated to modernizing nuclear arsenals towards efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

The use or threat of use of nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices constitutes a crime against humanity, violates international law and international humanitarian law, and infringes the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations. The delegation of Paraguay once again urges the nuclear-weapon States to withdraw their interpretative declarations to the Protocols of the Treaty of Tlatelolco, which prohibits nuclear weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean. Paraguay also calls for the development of a programme of work to progressively expand declared nuclear-weapon-free zones, particularly in the Middle East, and of an international convention to provide assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons in any circumstances.

The delegation of Paraguay advocates the peaceful use of nuclear energy through the implementation of programmes that are developed with the utmost care, thereby curbing environmental degradation caused by nuclear energy. The States that implement those programmes in their territories must do so on the basis of broad cross-border responsibility, while adhering to best practices in the areas of international cooperation, damage prevention and due diligence and adequately responding to possible cross-border damages and losses.

With regard to small arms and light weapons, the delegation of Paraguay reaffirms its commitment to implementing the Arms Trade Treaty, advocates the adoption of a complementary framework to the Treaty that addresses the production and reduction of existing conventional weapons and invites delegations to include munitions in their regulatory frameworks on small arms and light weapons and in their implementation. In that regard, we highlight the tradition of Latin America and the Caribbean — a peace-loving area that is free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction — of linking initiatives aimed at achieving disarmament, non-proliferation and international peace and security to efforts towards eradicating poverty and achieving the sustainable development of populations.

**Mr. Mero** (United Republic of Tanzania): My delegation joins previous speakers in congratulating you, Sir, and the other members of the Bureau on your well-deserved election. I wish to assure you of my delegation's full support and cooperation as you discharge your important responsibilities.

My delegation aligns itself with the statements delivered by the representatives of Morocco and

Indonesia on behalf of the Group of African States and the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, respectively (see A/C.1/73/PV.2).

While the seventy-third session of the General Assembly has now begun, meaningful disarmament in the world has not been achieved. On 26 September, we commemorated the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons, while the nuclear-weapon States and their nuclear-dependent allies continue to rely heavily on nuclear weapons in their security doctrines and invest billions of dollars in upgrading and modernizing those arsenals. This is very disappointing.

The United Republic of Tanzania calls on the nuclear-weapon States to fully comply with their legal obligations and unequivocal undertakings to accomplish the total elimination of nuclear weapons without further delay. Those undertakings need to be transparent, irreversible and internationally verifiable, in accordance with the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). It is also important that all non-nuclear-weapon States be provided with universal, unconditional, non-discriminatory and legally binding assurances by all nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons under any circumstances.

Tanzania appreciates and supports all efforts undertaken by the United Nations towards eliminating nuclear weapons. It is in that spirit that my delegation voted in favour of the landmark Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (resolution 71/258), adopted on 7 July 2017, as it reinforces the need for us to commit to and complement the NPT. In the same spirit, my Government is currently undertaking internal consultations and procedures in order to sign and ratify the Treaty in good time.

We reiterate our regrets that the ninth NPT Review Conference was unable to agree on a final outcome document, despite the concerted efforts of non-nuclear-weapon States. As preparatory meetings for the tenth NPT Review Conference have begun, with the first session held in May 2017 and the second and third in April and May this year, Tanzania calls on all States to work together so that an outcome document can be adopted in 2020.

While underscoring our commitment to the prohibition of nuclear weapons, I also wish to reaffirm that no rule or principle of international law should be

interpreted in a manner that inhibits, in part or in whole, the inalienable right of States to the peaceful uses of nuclear technology and the potential of such technology to contribute towards the sustainable and accelerated economic development and growth of developing countries. Tanzania has invested in the peaceful use of nuclear technology, bringing tremendous benefits to many people in societies today. The Tanzania Atomic Energy Commission laboratory is a modern facility that has installed modern equipment to address the benefits of applying nuclear technology in the fields of agriculture, livestock development, health, water resources, the mining industry and energy.

The proliferation of conventional weapons, such as small arms and light weapons, land mines and cluster munitions, is believed to be the most immediate security challenge to individuals, societies and States worldwide, fuelling civil wars, organized criminal violence, insurgency and terrorist activities and constituting a major obstacle to sustainable peace and development. Tanzania has therefore joined the international community in seeking ways to control and manage their production, spread, use and trade. Such efforts include the signing 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, the 2013 Arms Trade Treaty, the 2008 Convention on Cluster Munitions and the 1997 Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction.

Furthermore, Tanzania is also involved in regional efforts and mechanisms to deal with the scourge of weapons, including the 2001 Bamako Declaration on an African Common Position on the Illicit Proliferation, Circulation and Trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons; the 2001 Declaration concerning Firearms, Ammunition and Other Related Materials of the Southern African Development Community; the 2000 Nairobi Declaration on the Problem of the Proliferation of Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons in the Great Lakes Region and the Horn of Africa; the 2004 Nairobi Protocol for the Prevention, Control and Reduction of Small Arms and Light Weapons in the Great Lakes Region, the Horn of Africa and Bordering States; and the 2011 African Union Strategy on the Control of Illicit Proliferation, Circulation and Trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons.

In addressing the problem of small arms and light weapons, in 2001 Tanzania established a national focal point office to coordinate activities to prevent, combat and eradicate the proliferation of those weapons, within the Tanzanian police force and the Ministry of Home Affairs. The mandate of the office is derived from a number of protocols, programmes of action and declarations on small arms and light weapons, to which Tanzania is a party. Despite initiatives taken by the Government, Tanzania still faces challenges in controlling the spread of small arms and light weapons, due to a lack of sufficient funds and the influx of refugees, some of whom carry those weapons.

There is a clear link between disarmament and development. The new 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted in 2015, cannot be achieved if our Governments focus primarily on military expenditure. Impacts on development include contamination and loss of agricultural lands and employment, increased health-care costs for communities affected by war and increased costs for reconstructing buildings and infrastructure.

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

**Mr. Suárez Moreno** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): The delegation of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela wishes to congratulate you, Sir, on chairing the work of the important First Committee, in which you can count on our cooperation. We also congratulate the other members of the Bureau.

We align ourselves with the statement made by the representative of Indonesia, on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/73/PV.2), and that delivered earlier today by the representative of El Salvador on behalf of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States.

The Committee is carrying out its work in the midst of a global landscape marked by tension and armed conflicts in various regions of the world that have lasted for almost a decade, with negative effects on international peace and security, in which multilateral disarmament diplomacy has been affected by meagre progress in adopting measures and agreements in this field.

With its warmongering rhetoric and against a backdrop of perverse changes in political regime, unilateralism seeks to undermine the legal and political orders by resorting to the threat of use or illegal use of force against sovereign countries, in order to promote overthrowing legitimate Governments that oppose such imperial objectives. We once again reiterate our total rejection of unilateral actions and the policies that underpin them, such as the implementation of unilateral coercive measures that violate the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and international law.

For our country, full observance of the tenets enshrined in the Charter — such as unconditional respect for the sovereignty and political independence of States, non-intervention in internal affairs, abstaining from the threat or use of force and the peaceful settlement of disputes — is a fundamental condition for the maintenance of international peace and security. In that regard, we call for the safeguarding of those principles, which are the foundations for the peaceful coexistence of nations and inclusive multilateralism.

The existence of more than 14,000 nuclear weapons continues to pose a serious threat to humankind. Consequently, their elimination represents an essential objective to which we are fully committed. We are concerned that the programmes under way to improve and develop new war systems by the nuclear Powers could trigger the outbreak of an arms race, with destabilizing consequences for international peace and security. The nuclear Powers must make sincere efforts to reverse that negative trend, which is weakening the international non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament regime. We therefore urge the nuclear-weapon States to conduct negotiations in good faith, in accordance with article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, to reduce their nuclear arsenals with a view to completely eliminating those weapons.

Furthermore, as a State party to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, Venezuela encourages countries that have not signed or ratified the instrument to join that collective effort in favour of the cause of disarmament and peace. Of particular importance to humankind and complementary to other relevant agreements, the Treaty stipulates the illegal nature of nuclear weapons for the first time by prohibiting them, in addition to including provisions to address the humanitarian consequences related to their testing and use.

In that vein, our country rejects the preservation of nuclear doctrines, as we believe that the possible use of such weapons constitutes a violation of international humanitarian law and a crime against humanity. In that regard, we reject the declarations made by the United States, whose authorities have dangerously increased the possibility of responding to a possible non-nuclear strategic attack with atomic weapons. We therefore believe that eliminating such systems constitutes the best guarantee for the survival of humankind and ensures that they cannot be used.

Venezuela embraces outer space as a common heritage of humankind, whereby all nations must be guaranteed balanced access concerning its use, based on international cooperation in areas such as scientific research and technology transfer. The destabilizing effects of a possible outbreak of an arms race in outer space continue to be a cause for alarm.

In that context, we encourage the Conference on Disarmament to exercise its full powers as the negotiating body par excellence of agreements and multilateral disarmament measures in the pursuit of an international legal instrument on the prevention of an arms race in outer space in all its aspects that complies with the principles of equity, viability and verification. In that connection, we appreciate the initiative of China and Russia to draft a treaty on the prevention of the placement of weapons in outer space and the threat or use of force against objects located in outer space, which was presented at the Conference on Disarmament in 2008 and updated in 2014.

With regard to small arms and light weapons, we welcome the successful outcome of 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, held in June. The outcome document (A/CONF.192/2018/RC.3, annex) reaffirmed the validity of that multilateral political instrument to pool efforts aimed at effectively addressing the phenomenon, which has major repercussions for peace, stability, development and human rights, while taking into account the primary responsibility of each State in dealing with this problem. In that connection, we call for reinforcing national, regional and international measures on preventing the diversion and transfer of small arms and light weapons to violent non-State actors, including terrorist groups, in order

to help eliminate that illicit activity, to the benefit of international peace and security.

Finally, our country reaffirms its full commitment to multilateral disarmament diplomacy, as we are convinced of the urgent need for the international community to join efforts in eliminating nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, in full compliance with the principles of the Charter and in accordance with non-proliferation and disarmament treaties.

**Mr. Al-Khalifa (Qatar)** (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Sir, and the other members of the Bureau on your elections and wish you every success in your task. I assure you and the other participating delegations of the full support of the delegation of the State in ensuring the success of the First Committee's work. Moreover, I commend the efforts made by the Permanent Representative of Iraq and his team in chairing the previous session.

My delegation aligns itself with the statements made on behalf of the Group of Arab States and the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/73/PV.2).

Achieving tangible progress in international and regional peace and security requires serious cooperation and engagement, given the increasing conflicts and crises that are threatening international peace and security. We are also concerned about the prolonged crises and armed conflicts that are closely linked with the proliferation of weapons and their use by groups in conflict. The use of conventional weapons in armed conflicts is not the only threat; there is also an increase in the use of chemical weapons and the threat of the use of nuclear weapons. Therefore, efforts must be intensified to eradicate any imminent danger, as well as to prevent and resolve conflicts and crises, in addition to abiding by international law through the implementation of international conventions pertaining to disarmament and non-proliferation, including nuclear, chemical and biological weapons conventions.

The security and prosperity of our societies are a priority for the international community. We must therefore work to alleviate existing tensions in the world. That is a matter of concern to everyone and requires the engagement of all international stakeholders in a dialogue on issues relating to nuclear weapons, which represent an extremely dangerous threat to international peace and security. Given that the Conference on

Disarmament is the sole forum in which to address issues related to disarmament, achieving disarmament therefore requires from the Conference the adoption of a balanced and comprehensive programme of work that leads to achieving the aspirations of the international community in that regard.

Now more than ever, the world is aware that the absence of dialogue increases division among parties to a crisis and pushes them towards acquiring more armaments, thereby increasing the instability from which our world suffers. We reaffirm that international security will be achieved only by promoting collective crisis-prevention, while resolving disputes and conflicts in line with the provisions of article 33 of the Charter of the United Nations.

The State of Qatar believes that investing in conflict prevention is a way to ensure the international security that we all seek to achieve, as well as to save the financial and human resources that are currently allocated to arms as a result of an increase in international tensions and crises. That has become a source of serious concern for everyone due to its increased regional and international impact. My delegation therefore emphasizes the extreme importance of the peaceful settlement of disputes and conflict prevention, while also ridding humankind of suffering for generations to come.

Despite the positive outcome that has been achieved in disarmament and its impact on peace, security and stability in many regions of the world, the Middle East region still lacks security and stability. My delegation would like to express its deep concern about the lack of significant progress in ridding the Middle East region of nuclear weapons and the failure in upholding the commitments of the 1995 and 2000 Review Conferences of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), including the 2010 Action Plan and the outcome of the 2015 NPT Review Conference.

Electronic information security and cybersecurity constitute a major challenge facing the international community. The world has seen serious violations against the information technology systems of States and private institutions alike in recent years. Given the danger posed by the increase in electronic crimes and the dire need to provide cybersecurity for States and individuals, we must prevent that kind of crime and be able to benefit from scientific progress in the area of information. Since the State of Qatar is committed to international cooperation and recognizes the obligation

to address common challenges, it offered to host an international conference on cybersecurity, in line with the provisions of international law.

The State of Qatar adheres to disarmament and non-proliferation policies because we believe that achieving international peace and security is a shared responsibility of Member States. We also believe that multilateralism is the only way to deal with issues of disarmament, non-proliferation and international security in general. We must save humankind and protect it from weapons of mass destruction, in particular nuclear weapons.

The State of Qatar reiterates its commitment to implementing all obligations flowing from our adherence to international conventions on disarmament. In that regard, the National Committee for the Prohibition of Weapons, which was established in 2004, continues to provide advice to relevant governmental entities on all issues related to arms prohibitions in order to achieve the goals of relevant international conventions that the State of Qatar has joined. In 2012, we established the Doha Regional Centre for Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear Training, which provides national, regional and international training on issues concerning conventions on weapons of mass destruction, in collaboration with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons.

In conclusion, achieving peace and security in the world is a collective responsibility that can be reached only if every Member State fulfils its disarmament obligations, in particular on nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction. The State of Qatar reiterates its commitment to shouldering its responsibility as a State party to international instruments relating to disarmament, as well as a partner in the international efforts to achieve international peace and security.

**Mr. Almuzaini** (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as Chair of the First Committee at the seventy-third session of the General Assembly, as well as the other members of the Bureau. We are certain that your experience will contribute to the success of the Committee's work. I would also like to take this opportunity to express my appreciation to your predecessor, the Permanent Representative of the sisterly Republic of Iraq, for his prominent role in



successfully steering the work of the Committee during the previous session.

My country's delegation aligns itself with the statements delivered 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 Arab States (see A/C.1/73/PV.2).

The State of Kuwait affirms its permanent and steadfast positions regarding disarmament and international security issues, as we respect international conventions, especially those related to disarmament and international peace and security. Our positions have not changed, given the continued proliferation of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. My country has signed and ratified international conventions and treaties related to disarmament, including the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the Chemical Weapons Convention, the Biological Weapons Convention, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), the Convention on Early Notification of a Nuclear Accident and the Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement and its Additional Protocol.

We stress the importance of those treaties and conventions in reducing the risk of the proliferation of such weapons, especially the NPT, which is the cornerstone of multilateralism in the area of non-proliferation. It is also necessary to address in a balanced manner the three pillars of the Treaty, in particular the right of all States to develop, research and possess nuclear technology for peaceful purposes, in line with the safeguards system of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

Notwithstanding the compliance by the State of Kuwait, we are still concerned about the continuous failure to achieve concrete progress in terms of disarmament and the implementation of the agreed commitments in that regard. We reaffirm the need for breaking the decades-long impasse suffered by United Nations mechanisms, as they are failing to achieve any progress regarding the issues under this agenda item. In that regard, more efforts are needed from all Member States in order to find effective ways and means to address the increasing challenges.

The establishment of zones free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction is one of the most important issues called for by the NPT. The 1995 Review and Extension Conference adopted a resolution

establishing a nuclear-free zone in the Middle East. It was adopted as part of the indefinite extension of the Treaty. However, that goal is still far from being achieved, as Israel continues to possess those weapons, thereby violating all international resolutions that provide for its accession to the NPT and for it to subject its nuclear facilities to the IAEA safeguards system. Israel is adamant in rejecting the implementation of all the commitments related to that Review Conference. We therefore call for taking immediate measures to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in our region and promoting disarmament throughout the world.

The progress achieved in some areas with regard to disarmament and non-proliferation brings hope to the viability of continuing international and regional efforts towards establishing legal frameworks that address the consequences of the proliferation of all kinds of weapons. Sustained solutions must be found in order to rid the world and its peoples from the risks of wars and armed conflicts. We welcome the CTBT, which has treated nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction on an equal footing for decades. However, we have recently witnessed unprecedented ballistic-missile attacks by the Houthi militias on territories of the sisterly Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, targeting civil and religious sites. We reiterate our condemnation of those continued attacks, not to mention the chemical attacks in Syria. We are therefore certain that the proliferation of those weapons is ongoing, despite the treaties and resolutions that prohibit them. In that regard, we reiterate that the total and irreversible elimination of those weapons is the only guarantee for the non-proliferation, use or threat of use of those weapons by States and non-State actors alike.

The State of Kuwait attaches great interest to the phenomenon of illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, as it has a broad negative impact and causes more armed violence and local and international conflicts. That phenomenon prolongs conflicts and expands them geographically. The State of Kuwait therefore reiterates the importance of implementing the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. In that regard, my country welcomes the adoption of the outcome document of the third Review Conference, and we reiterate the need to preserve the consensual nature and agreed scope of the implementation of the programmes of work and to focus on combating illicit trade, instead

of restricting the legitimate rights of countries in obtaining essential weapons, or insisting on adding language derived from non-universal agreements.

In conclusion, my delegation looks forward to transparent and flexible consultations in the First Committee in order to reach consensus and the day when we are all able to celebrate the elimination of the scourge of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, thereby meeting the ambitions and aspirations of all peoples for a world of peace and security.

**Mr. Higgin** (New Zealand): The New Zealand delegation extends its best wishes to you, Sir, as you guide the First Committee at its seventy-third session through its review of the year's developments in multilateral disarmament and international security.

There are indeed some positives to be logged on this year's balance sheet, and there are some encouraging signs that this might be the case with regard to developments on the Korean peninsula. Overall, however, it is difficult to be optimistic, including in the face of ongoing conflicts in a number of regions and significant breaches of international humanitarian law.

Multilateral endeavours in a range of contexts are under threat. Of particular concern to the Committee must be the fact that there seems now to be much less attachment to the letter and spirit of past disarmament and non-proliferation undertakings. That is certainly apparent in the nuclear context, where tensions between nuclear-armed States are on the increase. My delegation was particularly struck by the observation of Secretary-General Guterres at last month's International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons that

“The global security environment has deteriorated, making progress in nuclear disarmament more difficult, yet more important.”

It would be hard, I think, to disagree with that sentiment, and probably equally hard to present the international community with a vicious circle of cause and effect of any greater consequence for us all than that one.

For New Zealand, for our New Agenda Coalition colleagues, and for the overwhelming majority of the United Nations membership, the increasing risks associated with nuclear weapons, including as a result of technological developments, alongside their humanitarian consequences, lend real urgency to the need for progress on nuclear disarmament. For our

part, New Zealand has done all that is in the power of a non-possessor of nuclear weapons to advance the disarmament cause, including, most recently, via our ratification of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. At the same time, we maintain our long-standing advocacy — for instance, as a member of the De-alerting Group — calling for the adoption of transitional steps towards the elimination of those weapons.

We welcome the efforts of the Secretary-General, notably through his *Securing Our Common Future — An Agenda for Disarmament*, which was released in May, to inject momentum into the nuclear debate and call for tangible progress in implementing existing commitments on nuclear disarmament. As he noted recently:

“Disarmament remains essential for sustaining non-proliferation. They are two sides of the same coin. Backward movement on one will inevitably lead to backward movement on the other.”

The international community must also strenuously resist backward movement on legally binding undertakings in the context of other weapons of mass destruction — both chemical and biological — and certainly with respect to obligations governing conventional weapons. If we fail to do so and if, for instance, the range of recent violations of the Chemical Weapons Convention in Syria, Malaysia and the United Kingdom continues to be met with impunity, we risk a reversion to what the Secretary-General aptly terms a moral dark age when referring in his agenda to recent uses of chemical and potentially of biological weapons. Were that to be the case, those caught up in situations of armed conflict, whether civilians or military, could rely on few of the hard-won advances in international humanitarian law made since the First World War.

Accordingly, we endorse the Secretary-General's proposals regarding the establishment of an investigative capacity into allegations of the use and a coordinated response framework to any actual use of biological weapons. Moreover, we also support his call for new leadership and unity in acting to restore respect for the global norm against chemical weapons. And we continue to give our strong support to the recent efforts of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons to work towards a mechanism for formally

identifying perpetrators of chemical-weapon attacks so that they can properly be held to account.

The most significant gain for international humanitarian law in the context of conventional weaponry during the current decade has been the adoption of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), with its specific prohibitions intended to prevent arms transfers that result, inter alia, in attacks against civilians and grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions. Now in its fourth year of operation, it is clear that the Treaty has some way to go in terms of its implementation, as well as universalization, before we can be confident that it is on track to make real inroads into the devastating impact resulting from illicit or irresponsibly traded arms.

Small arms and light weapons remain the primary enabler of armed violence on a daily basis. We welcome the Secretary-General's intention to redress what he acknowledges has hitherto been fragmented and limited efforts by the United Nations to address the problems caused by illicit small arms and to establish a new fund — a single platform — as a channel for international assistance for the control of small arms and light weapons. New Zealand was pleased to announce a contribution of \$100,000 to the new fund in June. We would hope that the fund will prove instrumental in reducing illicit arms flows and that, over time, it can play its part in advancing the principles and purposes of the ATT and improving human security, including in our own part of the Pacific.

The Secretary-General's *Securing Our Common Future — An Agenda for Disarmament* concludes with his hope that the agenda will serve as a catalyst for disarmament, with all the positive outcomes that flow from disarmament measures to be restored to the centre of the international community's common efforts for peace and security. The Committee has a very important role to play in that process, and also a fundamental responsibility to watch over international humanitarian law and States' compliance with their disarmament and non-proliferation undertakings.

**The Chair:** I shall now give the floor to delegations that have requested the floor in exercise of the right of reply. In that connection, I should like to remind all delegations that the first intervention is limited to 10 minutes and the second to five minutes.

**Mr. Seifi Pargou** (Islamic Republic of Iran): As has become standard practice, the United States has once again made baseless allegations against Iran. The United

States has long been addicted to imposing sanctions as part of its foreign policy. However, in addition to that, the current Administration has picked up an obsessive addiction to withdrawal — withdrawal from international agreements and international institutions. Why is it taking such an approach? Because it does not want to comply with its obligations. It does not want to be held accountable or responsible. It does not want to be judged by an international court — whether by the International Criminal Court or the International Court of Justice. It does not want to act in accordance with the law and, indeed, does not like the law. Above all, it is taking such an approach because it believes that international disorder better serves its national interests. Such action is being implemented on a daily basis. In one instance, the United States even withdrew from two international legal instruments in one day.

Surprisingly, the United States is now inviting — and in fact forcing — other countries to follow suit and become addicted to withdrawal and disobedience. Members may wish to know how it is doing that. As an example, following its unlawful withdrawal from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), the United States is now openly inviting all States to either ignore resolution 2231 (2015) or face punishment. That is happening for the first time in United Nations history. Another example is that the United States is now forcing other States to avoid becoming a party to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. It has specifically and expressly strengthened its NATO alliances, forcing others to disregard the Treaty or face the consequences.

That is how the United States is now behaving. Instead of acting responsibly, the United States is trying to accuse others. Its aim is to cover up its wrongdoings and isolate itself, but that is doomed to fail. The latest example of that failure was the recent Security Council meeting (see S/PV.8362) presided over by the United States President. In a meeting that was designed to isolate my country, Iran, the United States was instead totally isolated.

Today the United States stated that Iran has refused to come clean about its past nuclear programme. The United States is not eligible to judge the nature of nuclear programmes of any country, including Iran. An international organization, the International Atomic Energy Agency, is the only global authority competent to verify the non-diversion of nuclear material in States' nuclear programmes. It has previously confirmed that

Iran's declared nuclear materials in Iran are not being diverted, including doing so 12 times under the JCPOA, and has never reported any diversion by Iran of such materials. Instead of making baseless allegations about Iran, the United States should uphold its obligations under article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and come clean about it.

The United States also said that Iran is a threat with regard to the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs). That is quite irrelevant. Iran is a party to all the treaties banning such weapons and fully upholds its commitments. Iran is in fact a victim of WMDs that are spread and supplied by the United States. The fact that the United States supplied Saddam Hussein with weapons for chemical warfare has been well documented, and even by United States institutions. Considering those facts, the United States cannot cover up its non-compliance with its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention.

The United States also said that Iran continues to develop, test and encourage the proliferation of ballistic missiles. We do not participate in their proliferation, and those allegations are huge lies manufactured by the United States and its regional allies. However, we develop ballistic missiles. Despite the cries of the United States, Iran's missile programme is an indigenous conventional defensive capability. It is a defensive and deterrent tool against foreign threats. It is our national right under international law and we will continue to exercise it, without asking anyone's permission.

**Mr. Ji Haojun** (China): In response to the baseless accusations made against China by a certain country, I feel obliged to say a few words.

China has always called for the complete prohibition and thorough destruction of nuclear weapons. It has also committed to refraining from becoming the first country to use nuclear weapons at any time and under any circumstances, and has unequivocally promised not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States or nuclear-weapon-free zones. China is the only nuclear-weapon State that has made those commitments so far. For decades, China has maintained its nuclear arsenal at the minimum level necessary for national security.

With regard to outer space, China has always been firmly opposed to weaponizing outer space or starting an arms race there. In that regard, we have continued for decades to call on the international community to

start negotiations on a legally binding international instrument without delay with a view to preventing outer space from becoming a new battlefield. In contrast, some other countries are still sticking to a Cold War, zero-sum mentality. The country with the largest and most advanced nuclear arsenal is developing it fanatically, including adding so-called low-yield nuclear warheads, thereby further lowering its threshold for potentially using nuclear weapons. Such moves will inevitably exacerbate the global strategic balance and damage the international nuclear disarmament process. As the Gospel of Saint Matthew says:

“Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged ... And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?” (*The Holy Bible, Matthew 7:1-3*).

A country that has started to build a separate space force and has implemented a nuclear arsenal modernization programme costing \$1.2 trillion is obviously not in a good position to point fingers at any other country.

I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate that China will stick to a path of peaceful development. We will never seek hegemony, however strong we become, and we will not engage in any type of arms race with any other country or follow the bad example of other countries' unilateralism and propensity for withdrawal. Rather, China will work hard to uphold multilateralism and an international order based on the law.

**Mr. Yermakov** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We have had some very interesting discussions in the past three days. However, some topics involving various States unfortunately seem somewhat surreal, and to a large degree this is specifically related to attitudes to the issue of chemical weapons and their use. In that regard, there are lots of things that have unfortunately been left unsaid or simply stated incorrectly. I therefore invite the Committee to get comfortable while I tell everyone a story.

In a certain kingdom in a certain small island nation, things were not going well. Voters suddenly began taking the political games related to its membership in the European Union seriously, and they surprised the country's leadership by voting the wrong way. The ruling party's popularity ratings fell drastically. Parliament began to ask increasingly inconvenient questions and the Government was no longer trusted. In other words, the prospect of a complete and embarrassing Brexit

loomed. Faced with this situation, the island's wise men and women turned to their big brother for help and sage advice. They put their heads together and decided to blame all of their sins on Russia, especially since for the past five centuries such ungentlemanly — to put it bluntly — attacks on Russia had become quite frequent. They turned to an interesting and popular topic, the use of chemical weapons. They chose a charming little town in their country called Salisbury, which just happened to be close to one of the largest laboratories for developing chemical-weapon components in the world. They found a suitable target, a long-retired spy by now of no interest to anyone whatever by the evocative name of Skripal. They gave him a small dose of poison. It was unfortunate that his daughter happened to be visiting him at the time, but they managed to keep things under control. They had done the poisoning themselves and they could treat it themselves immediately. However, we have all seen the almost unimaginable craziness that resulted.

Scary Russia had used a chemical weapon with the tricky name of Novichok against those poor islanders. Who could ever have come up with a situation this surreal? But it had happened, and Russia must be called to account and punished. Naturally, the media, bought and paid for by the State, obediently picked up on the matter, especially as the timing was perfect, since Russia was about to hold presidential elections. How could they pass up the opportunity to damage Russia's President Putin, who had such enviably huge ratings not just at home but all over the world? They made their NATO allies and even some non-allies express blind solidarity. After all, opposing Russia is a joint effort, because after all, Russia is the most terrible threat in the world.

But things did not work out. For some reason Russia refused to admit its treacherous guilt. It refused to hide in a corner or weep rivers of tears. Horrors. Russia was actually demanding an investigation of this act of provocation. But there was nothing to investigate, because everything had been faked. No self-respecting experts, including those from that island State's intelligence services, wanted to damage their reputations, and to this day, no one has officially confirmed or denied anything. This is not surprising. Even schoolchildren in chemistry class learn that giving someone a tiny amount of poison and miraculously curing them on the spot is one thing, whereas the use of military-grade chemical weapons is another entirely.

One small vial of such a weapon would have been enough to wipe out all the inhabitants of Salisbury at once, something that of course the islanders would not go so far as to do, even for the sake of battling scary Russia.

But Moscow was so cunning that it continued to ask questions of the islanders and even to demand access to its poisoned citizens. Things were definitely going badly for the islanders. Some saner partners even suggested that they let the whole thing drop and be forgotten, recalling how Colin Powell, here at the United Nations, had once held up a little vial, which resulted in the hasty destruction of a State and the killing and injuring of hundreds of thousands of civilian victims. And somehow he got away with it. He apologized, claiming that he had been tragically misled, and everyone forgot about it as if nothing had ever happened. Oh, and Tony Blair also asked for forgiveness. Perhaps the whole affair of the Skripals could have been forgotten, but no. Russia was treacherous. Russia was not going to shut up. They had wanted to humiliate Russia, but Russia refused to be humiliated. On top of that, it continued to ask questions of the islanders and the whole world. But they had nothing to say.

The islanders had another think and decided to go even further, by poisoning a couple of their own homeless people. They were not worried. Maybe it might have some effect. There was another media uproar. Now they had something else to talk about again and distract the people's attention from their real problems and the imminent threat of a shameful Brexit.

Time continued to pass but Russia was not going away. It continued to ask questions. Shockingly, it even went to court, and in Britain. They had to keep up the pretence, so they found some Russian tourists — they come to Great Britain, including Salisbury, in droves, incidentally — with what seemed to them suitably sullen faces, which I remember was how they used to portray Russian secret servicemen in films. And they accused them of being responsible for poisoning the Skripals. No evidence? Not important. Anyway, who among the great democracies bothers with such minor details? The most important thing was to blame someone and blow the whole thing up in the media. Did someone really dare not to believe it? Believe it or not, someone did.

Well, my time is up, but this story is not over. Sadly, I will have to continue it another time.

**The Chair:** Before giving the floor to the next speaker, I must inform the Committee that the interpreters will have to leave at 1 p.m., in two minutes. All rights of reply after 1 p.m. can therefore be delivered in one of the six official languages of the United Nations but will not be interpreted into the other languages.

**Ms. Plath** (United States of America): Let me start by addressing my Russian colleague. I too love a good tale. However, I prefer non-fiction to fiction. We have a saying in English that truth is stranger than fiction. In the case of Russia and its blatant and repeated violations of chemical weapons, I do not think the facts could be truer than they already are. I will therefore not elaborate further on the matter, as I know it has been repeatedly addressed in our statements so far. I am sure that we will continue to discuss the matter over the next few days, and our position remains unchanged.

To my colleague from China, when China is prepared to have a frank and honest conversation about its use of anti-satellite weapons, perhaps we can all sit down and have a realistic and genuinely constructive dialogue on the resolution of this issue. As we have repeatedly said, we will not support or accept any legally binding arms-control treaty that is not effectively verifiable, which is one of the major faults of the particular treaty to which my colleague was referring.

I know that everybody is waiting to go to lunch, so I will keep my response to Iran brief. I might say that my delegation takes great offence at Iran's ridiculous accusations, but I think that goes without saying, because that is the tallest tale that has been spun here so far today. What the United States is excessively addicted to is holding accountable those who repeatedly violate international norms, treaties and agreements wherever we see such egregious behaviour. We will not be held hostage to international agreements that are repeatedly violated by those who are supposedly our treaty partners. The only victims here are those of the

State-sponsored terrorism of Iran, which it continues to support throughout the region, including in Yemen. We should remember those victims and not those of the tale that has been spun here by my colleague today, who is so clearly uninformed about his Government's use of chemical weapons.

**Mr. Yermakov** (Russian Federation): English is not my native language, but I will try to make myself understood.

I have only one question for my American colleagues. As I understand it, they do not like international legally binding agreements that are not verifiable. Does that mean that they are now going to withdraw from the Biological Weapons Convention?

**Mr. Ji Haojun** (China): I will be brief. I hate to name names — in my first right of reply I did not mention the name of any other country — but since our United States colleague has once again pointed the finger at China, I must reply.

It is known to all that the United States has a global missile defence system. Most of those systems, whether deployed on the ground or outer space, can be used as anti-satellite weapons. China is more than ready to discuss such asset capabilities with the United States.

**The Chair:** We have exhausted the list of speakers and the time available for this meeting.

I now give the floor to the Secretary of the Committee.

**Ms. Elliott** (Secretary of the Committee): The delegation of South Africa would like to inform delegations that informal consultations on its draft resolution A/C.1/73/L.63, entitled "The illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects", will take place in Conference Room A at 1.15 p.m.

*The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.*