



# General Assembly

Seventy-third session

## First Committee

9<sup>th</sup> meeting

Wednesday, 17 October 2018, 10 a.m.

New York

Official Records

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

*In the absence of the Chair, Ms. Edwards (Guyana),  
Vice-Chair, took the Chair.*

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

### Programme of work

**The Acting Chair:** As the members of the First Committee are aware, the general debate should end this morning. Twenty-three speakers remain on the list of speakers for the general debate. The Committee agreed that at least one and a half hours of the general debate would be devoted to statements by members of civil society.

After consulting the Bureau, I would like to propose that, should the Committee be unable to exhaust its list of speakers for the general debate this morning, the general debate continue this afternoon immediately after the conclusion of the high-level panel discussion. At that time, the Committee will hear the remaining speakers on its list as well as the civil society representatives registered to speak. After the general debate concludes, the Committee will begin its thematic discussion on the cluster "Nuclear weapons".

If there are no comments on that proposal, may I take it that the Committee agrees to proceed accordingly?

*It was so decided.*

**The Acting Chair:** Kindly note that, should the general debate continue in the afternoon, in accordance with the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, statements in the exercise of the right of reply will take place at the end of the day whenever two meetings have

been scheduled for that day and whenever such meetings are devoted to the consideration of the same item.

### Agenda items 93 to 108 (continued)

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

**The Acting Chair:** Before I open the floor to hear the first speaker in the general debate, I would like to urge all delegations once again to kindly observe the agreed time limits.

**Ms. McCarney (Canada):** I should like to congratulate you, Madam Vice-Chair, and all the other members of the Bureau on your elections, as well as to assure you of the full support of my delegation.

Canada believes that cooperation, innovation and inclusiveness are critical to addressing today's complex international security challenges. No single country can address those challenges alone; we must work together. Moreover, for the international rules-based order to work for all, the rules need to apply to all. Accountability cannot be a luxury afforded only when circumstances allow. Unfortunately, we see those rules under stress in the areas of non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament. Progress in one area is countered by backsliding, sometimes horrendously so, in others.

The norm against the use of chemical weapons has been violated, and there is convincing evidence that the transgressors include Syria and Russia, which are States parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC). We reiterate the need to condemn all use of

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chemical weapons and the importance of supporting the work of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). In addition, we welcome the positive step taken during the fourth special session of the Conference of States Parties to the CWC that gave the OPCW the mandate to attribute responsibility for chemical-weapon attacks.

The international security situation compels us to make progress on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, necessitating meaningful action by States concerned. To halt the spread of nuclear weapons and work towards their elimination, we need to collectively encourage processes that bring opposing parties to the table to discuss their differences, and ensure that existing agreements, such as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, are upheld in full. Canada has sought to support initiatives that, while seemingly modest, provide a framework for concrete advances. That includes the efforts to enhance our understanding of what is required for nuclear disarmament verification, as that will be critical to all of us achieving longer-term disarmament goals.

*(spoke in French)*

In the area of conventional weapon treaties and conventions, especially the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), we are heartened by the work being undertaken, although there is a need to further clarify and focus our efforts within the ATT. Canada has also welcomed the discussions on lethal autonomous weapons, which we believe are moving ahead at a reasonable pace and in a constructive manner through the Group of Governmental Experts on Certain Conventional Weapons process, ably steered by India.

We are troubled by the precarious state of the Conventions on Certain Conventional Weapons and on Biological and Toxin Weapons. While financial models may differ, Canada is open to a range of initiatives that would put each of the Conventions on a sustainable financial footing. Ultimately, however, the financial health of each Convention depends on every State party paying its assessed contributions, along with its arrears. While different from upholding the norms of the Conventions, that responsibility is no less important to each Convention's full implementation. It is part of the rules we agreed to uphold in joining each Convention.

Responsible behaviour and international cooperation are likewise essential for ensuring the peaceful and sustainable use of outer space. Activities

in the space domain and dual-use space technologies require careful governance to ensure that all States continue to benefit from space assets and services. We are optimistic that the current Group of Governmental Experts on the Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space will identify potential elements of a legally binding instrument that would complement norms of responsible behaviour in outer space. We also welcome the consensus at the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space on 21 guidelines for the long-term sustainability of outer-space activities.

Canada welcomes the Secretary-General's agenda for disarmament and its implementation plan, both for the effort to capture the range and scope of current global disarmament challenges and for seeking to leverage the considerable capabilities of the United Nations as a critical influencer in that field. We will work with the Secretary-General and the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs on the agenda, as and where appropriate.

In conclusion, we wish to reiterate the ongoing importance of reflecting gender perspectives in disarmament and international security. This year in Geneva, with the active collaboration of civil society groups, Canada hosted a workshop on gender and disarmament for interested Permanent Missions. Many of those Missions and civil society groups shared a strong desire to work together to promote gender perspectives and agreed to collaborate on the effort at First Committee. The group has since advocated with a number of sponsors for the incorporation of gender perspectives in their draft resolutions, and has been heartened by their openness to doing so. In that spirit, our own draft resolution on a fissile material cut-off treaty includes language recognizing the importance of equal participation by women in all processes to advance such a treaty.

**Mr. Sisa** (Botswana): Allow me, at the outset, to assure you, Madam, and the other members of the Bureau of our total support. We are confident that you will guide the deliberations of the First Committee to a successful outcome. In the same vein, my delegation takes this opportunity to thank the outgoing Chair, the Permanent Representative of Iraq, for his outstanding leadership of the First Committee at the seventy-second session.

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

Morocco on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and the Group of African States, respectively (see A/C.1/73/PV.2). I wish to add a few remarks in my national capacity.

I should like to begin by reaffirming Botswana's commitment to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, in particular with respect to the maintenance of international peace and security. Our world is today characterized by endless conflicts and strife affecting millions of people. In that regard, the deliberations of the Committee should result in outcomes that facilitate the attainment of sustainable international peace and security for the good of humankind. We firmly believe that the deliberations of the Committee should be guided by, among other things, the noble objectives of saving succeeding generations from the scourge of war and making the world a safer place for all to live.

Botswana remains gravely concerned about the serious threats to international peace and security in many parts of the world, which arguably present the greatest challenge to sustainable development. As we witness an alarming rise in instability, insecurity and violent conflict characterized by untold devastation and suffering of communities, violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms of innocent peoples, we wish to emphasize that sustainable development cannot be attained when there is no peace, security or stability.

The existence of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction constitutes an existential threat not only to nations that possess such weapons but also to the entire human race. In that regard, we join other delegations in underscoring the fact that the total elimination of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction is the only absolute guarantee against the use or threat of use of such weapons. We also reject the notion that such weapons are necessary due to security concerns, because, in our view, the potential catastrophic humanitarian consequences of the intentional or unintentional use of such weapons far outweigh any other considerations. In that respect, we urge those nations whose military doctrines are premised on the use of nuclear weapons to rethink their strategies.

My delegation fully supports the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. The Treaty is yet another significant milestone that adds to the existing body of public international law towards

non-proliferation and the ultimate goal of total the elimination of nuclear weapons. We look forward to becoming a State party to the Treaty in the near future, once internal consultations are concluded.

While we totally reject the possession and use of nuclear weapons, we are, however, in support of utilizing nuclear energy for peaceful purposes such as power generation, agriculture and medicine, to mention only a few.

We fully recognize the important contribution made through the creation of zones free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction. As a State party to the Treaty of Pelindaba, we firmly support all other treaties on nuclear-weapon-free zones. In that regard, we fully support the Secretary-General's disarmament agenda, which underscores the significance of such zones as efforts to assist the international community in preparing for a world free of nuclear weapons. In the same vein, we wish to reiterate our support for the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East, in accordance with the relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions.

Botswana notes with deep concern the use of chemical and biological weapons in the Middle East, Asia and Europe, which undermines international instruments such as the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention. The increased likelihood of the possession of such weapons by non-State actors and radical extremist groups is also a matter of concern.

Botswana is also concerned about the threats posed by terrorism, the illicit trade in and flow of small arms and light weapons, transnational organized crime, violent crime and abuse, and human trafficking, to cite just a few. The illicit trade and trafficking in small arms and light weapons are rapidly spreading in many regions of the world, causing human suffering and death. That calls for the development of robust international regulatory frameworks. In that respect, we welcome the 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. We urge Member States to fully implement its provisions. We appeal for the provision of technical assistance, particularly to those Member States that lack the requisite resources and expertise.

We reaffirm our commitment to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and remain resolute with the global target of eliminating anti-personnel mines by 2025. In that context, we urge the full implementation of the Maputo Action Plan, which sets critical milestones under the Convention.

In conclusion, Botswana reaffirms its commitment to collaborating with other Member States to address challenges to international peace and security.

**Mr. Tituaña Matango** (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): Ecuador aligns itself with the statements made by the representatives of Indonesia and El Salvador on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, respectively (see A/C.1/73/PV.2).

Ecuador believes that it is unacceptable that nuclear weapons still exist. We are concerned about the possibility that nuclear-explosive devices may again be used, whether intentionally or unintentionally, given the immense risks and humanitarian consequences any such use would incur. We believe that States should eliminate any reference to nuclear deterrence from their military doctrines and refrain from making military preparations involving the possibility, and therefore the threat, of the use of nuclear weapons, whether in their direct possession or in the context of a broader alliance.

Like most States, Ecuador believes that nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation are, as they should be, parallel, interrelated and coordinated processes. My country, a non-nuclear-weapon State, has complied and will comply with its international obligations regarding nuclear non-proliferation. It has done so in the hope, which we harbour still today, that the nuclear-weapon States would also honour their commitments relating to nuclear disarmament. However, Ecuador regrets that those obligations have not yet been upheld.

We participated last year in a significant milestone in the quest for a world free of nuclear weapons. Finally, after several decades, the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons was adopted, establishing a legally binding international instrument prohibiting such weapons as well as a path towards their total eradication. Ecuador, which is engaged in the process of ratification, reaffirms its commitment to, and underscores the importance of, that international agreement.

Ecuador also reiterates its commitment to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and its three pillars, which must be implemented in a balanced way, without discrimination or double standards. This year marks its fiftieth anniversary.

In a context geared towards nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, we express our support for the prompt entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). The CTBT will enter into force when those annex 2 States not yet having ratified the Treaty do so, not through resolutions issued by bodies that have little or nothing to do with its operation. Ecuador reiterates its condemnation of all nuclear tests and, reflecting our commitment, the infrasound and radionuclide stations in the Galápagos Archipelago are now operational.

With regard to other weapons of mass destruction, and based on the principles I have already outlined, the delegation of Ecuador wishes to reiterate its full commitment to the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention. We condemn any use of such weapons, anywhere by anyone, and call for their total elimination, pursuant to the commitments undertaken in the Conventions, within the established deadlines, without further extension or delay.

As a contracting party to the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean, known as the Treaty of Tlatelolco, which established the first densely populated zone free of arms and marked its fiftieth anniversary last year. In the same context, we urge all States to work towards establishing and consolidating other nuclear-weapon-free zones in all regions of the world as a process for achieving the greater objective of general and complete disarmament.

In the area of conventional weapons, Ecuador shares and strongly supports the objectives of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. Ecuador has signed on to the Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, their Parts and Components and Ammunition, which complements the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. We have also ratified the Convention on Cluster Munitions, the universalization of which we view as priority, since

such weapons have particularly cruel and deleterious effects, especially against the most vulnerable groups.

Likewise, given that civilian populations are the principal victims of such weapons, I wish to reiterate our commitment and support to the Convention on the Employment, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction.

My country also expresses its concern regarding the development, improvement and use of unmanned aerial vehicles and autonomous lethal weapons, and condemns their use. We therefore support the work under way in that regard in the context of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, but believe that it must go beyond mere regulation of international trade in such weapons.

An arms race in outer space would pose a very serious threat to international peace and security. Ecuador defends the need to guarantee the peaceful use of outer space, avoid its militarization by placing military equipment beyond the atmosphere, or the creation of so-called space forces. Outer space is part of the shared heritage of humankind and we reject the notion that it be considered in any way as a new theatre of armed conflict.

Disarmament has been among the priorities of the United Nations since its founding. While many are frustrated that more has not been achieved in that area, we must continue supporting the importance and centrality of disarmament efforts in the United Nations. We therefore support the activities under the Secretary-General's *Ensuring Our Common Future — An Agenda for Disarmament* with a view to ensuring the recognition of nuclear disarmament as a high priority and the promotion of initiatives aimed at facilitating dialogue among States and a return to the path towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

It is important to continue strengthening the relationship between disarmament and development. In keeping with the premise of the report (A/66/168) of the Secretary-General in that regard — that peace, security and development are closely interrelated, since there can be no development without peace and no peace without development — we must redouble our efforts to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Goals at the same time as we step up efforts to advance towards disarmament goals.

In conclusion, Ecuador reiterates its belief in the need to convene a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. We therefore call for consultations to continue based on the historic agreement reached in 2017 in the Open-ended Working Group on the matter, which Ecuador had the honour to chair, with a view to the prompt holding of such a session for the good of the international community.

**Mr. Akiapo** (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): On behalf of my delegation, I would like to extend my sincere congratulations to the Chair upon his election to lead the work of the First Committee. We are convinced that his experience and leadership will be valuable assets for the conduct and success of our work.

My delegation associates itself with the statements delivered by the representatives of Indonesia and Morocco on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and the Group of African States, respectively (see A/C.1/73/PV.2).

The global security environment this year has hardly reassured us in comparison to the preceding year. In fact, despite the significant progress attained, including in the context of the talks on the Korean peninsula, my delegation remains concerned about the deterioration in the security environment, in particular in the Middle East, the undermining of the Iranian nuclear agreement, the repeated use of chemical weapons, the growing illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, the progressive development of smaller nuclear warheads, and attempts to conquer outer space. By their nature, those points of political and military tension remind us of the difficult moments of the Cold War and its accompanying anguish, which the entire world sees as a grim chapter in its history.

Despite the adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, in July 2017, the goal of complete disarmament cannot be achieved in a timely manner due to the argument of nuclear deterrence that is still upheld by the nuclear-weapon States. Furthermore, my delegation notes with regret that, despite its signature and ratification by 183 and 167 States, respectively, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty has yet to enter into force. We commend Thailand, the most recent State to have ratified the Treaty.

My country invites States to take an innovative approach to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, in view of the catastrophic humanitarian and environmental consequences that could result from the

use of nuclear weapons. We condemn the tendency of States to continue investing in modernizing their nuclear arsenals while investing very little in eliminating those weapons and their delivery vehicles. Likewise, Côte d'Ivoire hopes that a universal and non-discriminatory instrument on negative security assurances is adopted so as to provide security to non-nuclear-weapon States.

Moreover, my country remains concerned about the recurrent use of chemical weapons and calls for the universalization of the Chemical Weapons Convention. For that reason, and due to the proven risk of the diversion of weapons of mass destruction by non-State actors, including terrorist groups, we also hope that a legally binding protocol to the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention is adopted.

More fatal than nuclear weapons, conventional weapons claim countless victims throughout the world, especially in conflict areas. In many countries, defence and security forces and civilians, as well as United Nations forces, particularly in the Sahel, are the daily victims of improvised explosive devices, explosive remnants of war and anti-personnel mines. My delegation remains convinced that the full and responsible implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects could save lives and drastically reduce the annual 500,000 victims of small arms and light weapons. We congratulate France on the success of the third Review Conference of the Programme of Action and, above all, on its conclusions that will guide our actions over the next six years.

Despite that glimmer of hope, the phenomenon of arms brokering and the lack of consensus on the issue of munitions remain a source of concern for my country. Without resolving the issue of munitions, no further ground will be gained in combating the illicit trafficking of arms. In that regard, Côte d'Ivoire is willing to share its experience in the area of munitions management, in accordance with the Economic Community of West African States Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons, Their Ammunition and Other Related Materials.

Advances in information and communication technologies must not undermine our collective security. My delegation hopes that consensual, transparent and non-discriminatory measures, based on international law, will be adopted in order to mitigate the malicious

use of cyberspace. In that respect, it is undeniable that the contribution of young people is invaluable in fighting radicalization and digital crime in cyberspace.

In that same vein, outer space, which is rightly considered our common good, should be safeguarded against any militarization and arms race. In that regard, it would be appropriate to adopt a legally binding instrument or a consensus-based code of conduct on space activities.

Furthermore, my country invites Member States to maintain their political and financial support for United Nations regional centres for peace and disarmament, which remain an invaluable support for cooperation in the fight against trafficking small arms and light weapons.

The maintenance of international peace and security requires the participation of all Member States. That will therefore be effective only if we are able to overcome our misunderstandings and interests within a strictly multilateral framework, in particular regarding disarmament mechanisms, which give us the opportunity to allow dialogue to prevail in all circumstances.

**Mr. Laouani** (Tunisia) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, on behalf of the delegation of Tunisia, I wish to congratulate the Chair on his election. We assure him of our full support in successfully carrying out his work. I would also like to take this opportunity to commend the Iraqi chairmanship of the previous session.

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

Faced with the growing complexity of crisis situations and the increasing risks to international security, Tunisia wishes to stress the importance of dialogue, multilateralism and respect for international law in conflict prevention, disarmament and strengthening non-proliferation regimes.

In that regard, we welcome the ongoing diplomatic process to achieve denuclearization on the Korean peninsula, in particular the positive momentum created this year by the three inter-Korean summits and the historic meeting between the President of the United States of America and the Chairman of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. We hope that that will

lead to lasting peace on the peninsula and for all the countries of the region.

We also believe that the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, concerning the Iranian nuclear programme, is an example of successful multilateral diplomacy, the effective implementation of which is of the utmost importance.

Tunisia welcomes the Secretary-General's agenda for disarmament and shares the hope that it will contribute to the resumption of dialogue and negotiations on disarmament.

Tunisia supported the process leading to the adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons from the very beginning and sees it as a step in the right direction, while strengthening the non-proliferation regime. We hope that, once in force, it will contribute to the goal of eliminating those weapons.

In the meantime, Tunisia reiterates its call for the universalization and full implementation of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), based on its three pillars. The nuclear-weapon States have a special responsibility in that regard, and Tunisia believes that it is essential that they strengthen dialogue among themselves in order to restore confidence, reduce the role of nuclear weapons in their respective deterrence doctrines and resume negotiations on nuclear disarmament. Tunisia also calls on all States that have not yet done so to sign and ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

Tunisia deeply regrets the lack of progress made to date in establishing a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East. The failure to hold a conference to negotiate a treaty establishing such a zone, which had long been planned and awaited, was one of the main causes for the failure of the last Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons in 2015.

In that context, and in the hope of ending the deadlock, Tunisia supports the draft decision submitted by the Group of Arab States, which, once adopted, will entrust the Secretary-General with convening a conference to develop a legally binding treaty on the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East before June 2019. The conference would be attended by all States of the region, as well as by the

three sponsors of the 1995 resolution and relevant international organizations.

Tunisia believes that such a conference would be an ideal opportunity to establish a platform for dialogue and constructively address regional disarmament and non-proliferation challenges. Such an achievement would provide an opportunity to eventually create a strong regional security mechanism for achieving sustainable peace and security in the region in an inclusive and cooperative manner. Care has indeed been taken to indicate in the draft decision that the proposed conference would adopt its decisions by consensus with a view to reaching agreements freely arrived at by the States of the region. We also believe that launching such a negotiation process would serve to facilitate the resolution of one of the most challenging problems of the NPT Review Conferences and offer a better chance of success at the 2020 Review Conference.

We continue to fear that the status quo will undermine the credibility of the NPT and lead the countries of the region into a dangerous arms race, against the backdrop of the persistent terrorist threat and risk of non-State actors acquiring weapons of mass destruction, be they nuclear, biological or chemical. Tunisia seizes this opportunity to renew its call for the universalization of the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological Weapons Convention and its condemnation of all uses of those weapons.

The proliferation of small arms and light weapons fuels internal conflicts, trafficking and the activities of terrorist groups. We reiterate our support for the full and effective implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and welcome the outcomes of the third Review Conference of the Programme, held in New York in June.

Tunisia shares the concerns expressed about the proliferation of cyberattacks and their great potential to wreak havoc. We call on States to respect international law in the digital realm. We support initiatives aimed at strengthening international cooperation for a secure cyberspace that safeguards individual freedoms and respects the sovereignty of States. In the light of the development of new autonomous weapons systems, Tunisia calls for the regulation of the use of artificial intelligence for military purposes. We also hope

that appropriate measures will be taken to avoid militarization and an arms race in outer space.

In conclusion, as a candidate for a non-permanent seat on the Security Council for the period 2020-2021, Tunisia commits to continuing to promote disarmament, non-proliferation and international security and to support all initiatives in that regard.

**Mr. Assaraf** (Israel): At the outset, allow me to congratulate the Chair on assuming the chairmanship. Let me assure him of my delegation's cooperation.

The Middle East is an area that has been fraught for many years with wars, conflict, hostilities and human suffering. It has grown even more unstable and volatile in recent times, with civil wars; the disintegration of national territories; the increase in areas that are partially or fully under the control of terrorist organizations, some of which are fully supported by States of the region; growing proliferation; and the diversion of conventional weapons to State and non-State actors. That includes sophisticated weapons and, most significantly, the prevalent use of chemical weapons, in contravention of international treaties and Security Council resolutions, as well as the pursuit of nuclear-weapon capabilities by States in the region, which is also against their obligations and commitments to treaties and the international community.

That troubling reality and those threats have proven to yield devastating consequences, which are not limited to the Middle East but rather pose a grave threat well beyond its geographical boundaries. Israel supports a vision of a peaceful Middle East free of hostilities, as should all of the region's inhabitants and States. Such a vision, however, cannot be fulfilled without mutual recognition, reconciliation and the cessation of all acts of terrorism, aggression and hostilities, some of which are conducted or supported by States whose representatives are sitting in this very room.

In May, President Trump announced the United States withdrawal from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). The State of Israel has been unequivocal regarding the threats and the dangerous implications of that agreement among the five permanent members of the Security Council and Germany and Iran to the security and the stability of the Middle East since its inception. In the two years following the implementation of the JCPOA, Iran has only strengthened its malign behaviour in our region. Iran continues to test the patience of the international

community and repeatedly tests the boundaries of Security Council resolution 2231 (2015). The Iran nuclear archive provides straightforward evidence regarding its nuclear military ambitions and its activities to achieve that goal.

Iran has conducted more than 20 ballistic missile tests since the JCPOA implementation day. All of those missiles were capable of carrying nuclear warheads. The missiles tested by the Iranian regime were of various ranges — up to 2,500 kilometres, which is well beyond the boundaries of the Middle East. Iran has been strongly condemned for launching a satellite-launch vehicle, as it includes components used in intercontinental ballistic missiles. Iran's missile activity extends to the whole Middle East. It has threatened the free movement of ships in the Red Sea, attacked Saudi and Iraqi targets and violated their sovereignty, established missile production and assembly factories in Syria and in Lebanon and built missile bases in the region. Those and other missile activities are all flagrant violations of resolution 2231 (2015). The reports on the implementation of resolution 2231 (2015) call on Iran to refrain from such activities. Israel calls upon the international community to unequivocally condemn those activities and show zero tolerance for Iran's behaviour.

Iran's malignant activities are not limited to ballistic-missile testing. Tehran continues to promote subversive activities throughout the region through its support for terror organizations, which include supplying weapons, financial and political support and military training. Those activities contravene numerous Security Council resolutions and are mentioned in various reports on the implementation of resolution 2231 (2015).

The prevalent use of chemical weapons by the Syrian regime, which acceded to the Chemical Weapons Convention and vowed to forgo its entire chemical-weapons programme, was clearly stipulated, inter alia, in the 2016 report (see S/2016/738) of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism. The most recent report of the Fact-Finding Mission of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons clearly states that a chemical agent was used in Douma on 7 April. That report is joined by numerous reports and statements made by the Organization of the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons Director-General regarding gaps, inconsistencies and discrepancies in the Syrian declaration. That is a source of concern that must be



addressed clearly and firmly by the international community in order to prevent the further erosion of the absolute norm against the use of chemical weapons. We therefore commend the most recent special session of the Conference of the States Parties to Review the Operation of the Chemical Weapons Convention, which acknowledged the vital importance of establishing attribution mechanisms to hold accountable the perpetrators of those horrible acts.

Conventional weapons continue to claim the lives of hundreds of thousands of people around the world on an annual basis. Those weapons, especially small arms and light weapons and weapons systems such as man-portable air defence systems, have proliferated in the region. It is clear that States need to abide by their international obligations not to proliferate conventional weapons and instead combat it by effectively managing their stockpiles. Compliance and the implementation of instruments, as applicable, such as the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, are important if we want to achieve the goal of a safer world.

On the matter of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, Israel wishes to emphasize its view that the Treaty does not create, contribute to the development of or indicate the existence of customary law related to the subject or content of the Treaty.

On the issue of cybersecurity, as an active contributor to the previous Group of Governmental Experts, Israel regrets that the latest Group was unable to agree consensually on the outstanding issues. Israel is ready to continue supporting and contributing to that important work in future.

Finally, some actors in the region claim that a comprehensive security architecture can be established in the Middle East without direct engagement with Israel, recognition of Israel's right to exist within safe and secure borders or reducing regional tension and building the necessary trust and confidence among States of the region. That position is untenable and will ruin the pursuit of a safe, stable and secure Middle East. Those actors in the region create excuses, such as the nuclear-weapon-free zone, in order not to have to tackle the real issues of the Middle East. That is why such actors want to keep the issue in the multilateral arena, while pushing Israel away. They do not care about arms-control forums and prefer to take them hostage in

order to single out Israel, no matter the consequences. Those who join them can blame only themselves for damaging and collapsing arms-control forums.

Regional dialogue, based on the widely accepted principle of consensus, must emanate exclusively from the region and be aimed at addressing the concerns of all States therein on an equal footing and in an inclusive manner. That is why Israel participated in good faith in the five rounds of the G1ion process, while others in the region refused to engage in a constructive manner and ultimately withdrew from the consultations, as they did in the arms control and regional security talks in the early 1990s.

It took a long time and considerable international efforts to get to where we are today on this issue, both in the General Assembly and in its First Committee draft resolutions. It is very unfortunate that that progress is about to be broken by the Group of Arab States, which wants to take the United Nations and the Secretary-General hostage and single out Israel, while once again sabotaging arms-control forums. Israel will no longer cooperate with any such initiative. We regret that we do not see the same enthusiasm in those actors to solve the real problems in the Middle East.

**Mr. Milanović** (Serbia): I would like to join my colleagues in congratulating the Chair and the other members of the Bureau on their election to their respective posts. I assure the Chair of the full support of my delegation in the discharge of his important duties.

We have witnessed dynamic shifts and turns in the global security environment in the past several years. Problems and challenges facing the international community in a world of rising interdependence and complexity are multiplying and becoming ever-more intertwined. The issues related to weapons control, disarmament and non-proliferation are therefore becoming ever more important, and the topics we have discussed in the past few days are ever-more relevant.

Regrettably, we can see that we are still miles away today from our principal goal of a world without nuclear weapons. The proliferation and modernization of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs), particularly of nuclear weapons, present serious challenges to international peace and stability and make the process of sustainable development even more difficult to achieve. What we need is unity in our endeavours to build a safe and more secure world. The first and right step in that direction is to respect the existing

international principles and norms in the field of disarmament, non-proliferation and weapons control. In that regard, we join the Secretary-General's call on all States to work together to achieve concrete, verifiable and irreversible steps to prepare for a world without nuclear weapons.

Let me remind the First Committee that Serbia has acceded to all key international instruments in that area. We consider the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) to be the cornerstone of international security and the pillar of the international non-proliferation regime and of the use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. We hope that the dynamic discussions during this year's session of the First Committee will serve as a solid basis in preparations for the upcoming 2020 NPT Review Conference.

As a country that ratified the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) in 2004, Serbia joins the group of countries that strongly support its universal implementation at the soonest possible time. In that context, we welcome Thailand's ratification of the CTBT. The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization has, on several occasions, demonstrated its invaluable role in quickly providing reliable and independent data — something that no single country alone can do. We believe its verification mechanism to be an effective instrument for preventing and discouraging nuclear-weapon development and proliferation.

Like the rest of the international community, we have been carefully following the recent developments on the Korean peninsula. The positive steps undertaken this year give us hope that progress could be achieved in finding a comprehensive, peaceful, diplomatic and political solution to achieve peace and stability on the Korean peninsula.

With regard to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), we remain convinced that it represents a significant achievement of multilateralism. We hope that, despite the uncertainties that the JCPOA is currently facing, all stakeholders will continue to make every possible effort to address the challenges, thereby contributing to this vital issue for the global non-proliferation architecture.

The Republic of Serbia remains fully committed to the common goals of non-proliferation and disarmament. We continue to make efforts to improve our safety legislation, with the aim of meeting internationally recognized security requirements and implementing all

obligations under the relevant international documents and conventions, especially in the non-proliferation field. In that respect, allow me to highlight a few recent concrete steps undertaken by my country to enhance the non-proliferation regime in all its aspects.

The Parliament of the Republic of Serbia ratified the Amendment to the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material in March 2016. That ratification paved the way for the global entry into force of the Amendment, which we strongly welcome. Furthermore, last year, our national Parliament ratified the Convention on Nuclear Safety and the Joint Convention on the Safety of Spent Fuel Management and on the Safety of Radioactive Waste Management. This year the additional protocol to our Safeguards Agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency will also be ratified.

In addressing the proliferation risk posed by non-State actors, Serbia continues to attach great importance to compliance with the provisions of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004). Based on the recommendations and outcomes of the comprehensive review of resolution 1540 (2004), at the beginning of this year the Republic of Serbia adopted its second national action plan for the implementation of resolution 1540 (2004) for the period 2018-2022 and established an inter-agency working group for the implementation of the plan.

Furthermore, other multilateral agreements in the area of WMD non-proliferation, such as the Biological Weapons Convention and the Chemical Weapons Convention, continue to make a vast contribution to the prevention and elimination of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. At a time of great risks of proliferation, it is in all our best interests to preserve those important multilateral agreements in order to guarantee our collective safety and security and ensure their full and effective implementation.

The illicit trade in conventional weapons continues to threaten regional and international security and stability and to affect the lives of millions of people all over the world. To counter that phenomenon and its consequences, Serbia continues to actively support the global implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT). We believe that a regional approach to cooperation in the field of arms export control, including cooperation in compliance with ATT obligations, is of paramount importance. In that context, the countries of the

Western Balkans have established an effective regional cooperation mechanism in the area of small arms and light weapons export control — the Centre for Small Arms and Light Weapons in South-East Europe — the contribution of which to regional confidence-building, transfer of knowledge and best practices and information exchange is indeed trailblazing. Furthermore, during the London Western Balkans Summit in July, a road map for a sustainable solution to the illegal possession, misuse and trafficking of small arms and light weapons and their ammunition in the Western Balkans by 2024 was adopted. We are currently in the process of drafting a national action plan, in accordance with the road map.

Serbia also welcomes the outcome document of the third Review Conference on the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, which can help to protect the most vulnerable members of society from illicit flows of small arms and light weapons and thereby help to advance the Sustainable Development Goals.

Last but not least, I would like to address, in a few words, the calls made with regard to the importance and the need to reactivate the Conference on Disarmament (CD) in Geneva as the main negotiating body in this area. It is my country's earnest hope that CD States parties will finally consider another substantial issue of special importance to my country — the expansion of the CD's membership. There is an urgent need for such expansion because the issues on the CD's agenda are of paramount importance to a much larger number of countries than the current 65 CD member States. They are universal in nature and should be discussed and negotiated on a non-discriminatory, transparent and multilateral basis. Every country should be given an opportunity to participate in the process and assume its share of responsibility. Clear political will is necessary to overcome the current stalemate, start serious discussions on the substantive issues and make a credible contribution to international peace and security. To that end, Serbia stands ready to make its own active contribution.

**Mr. Ciamba** (Romania): Let me first begin by expressing our satisfaction at Ambassador Ion Jinga's assumption of the Chair of the First Committee. As the representative of a country that values the notion of peace through diplomacy, I am certain that he will honour the Committee's trust and support efforts to

deliver the best solutions to the current challenges facing international peace and security.

With the understanding that Romania shares the assessments of the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union (EU) (see A/C.1/73/PV.2), allow me to highlight a few issues of particular importance to my country.

Romania strongly believes in the power of effective multilateralism and international cooperation. When new and old challenges threaten the global security situation, it is our responsibility to uphold and strengthen the rules-based international system by seeking multilateral solutions that will enable us to achieve a stable global and regional environment.

In that context, I would like to commend the Secretary-General's ambitious initiative *Securing our Common Future — Agenda for Disarmament* and express my country's strong support for accomplishing its objectives. Romania remains firmly committed to effective multilateral disarmament and non-proliferation mechanisms. I would like to reaffirm our complete support for the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) as the cornerstone of international law. It is our conviction that the steady and effective implementation of the relevant provisions of that essential legal instrument remains the way forward in achieving nuclear disarmament and will benefit all peaceful nuclear-energy applications.

The NPT should continue to be our best tool in the global efforts to achieve a world without nuclear weapons, with no shortcuts in the process. Any efforts towards nuclear disarmament must be addressed collectively, in an appropriate, step-by-step manner and in accordance with the security challenges and treaty commitments of all NPT States parties, based on a series of concrete actions and effective steps and in the interests of all concerned. In the light of the fiftieth anniversary of the NPT's entry into force in 2020, Romania encourages all parties to take a forward-looking approach by doing their utmost to minimize differences in views and look for compromise to advance our shared goal of strengthening the integrity of the NPT across all its three pillars.

Instead of starting down different paths, we should work further with nuclear-weapon States and non-nuclear-weapon States alike on a practical, consensus-based approach to tackle nuclear threats, such as the entry into force of the Comprehensive

Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, which is a feasible target that would pave the way towards achieving stronger security for all. It is our duty to work together to keep that issue high on the agenda. We should raise awareness of the benefits of the Treaty and its verification regime for international peace and security.

Another logical step is to launch negotiations as soon as possible in the Conference on Disarmament on a fissile material cut-off treaty, which is a critical and topical instrument in making progress in our common endeavours in the nuclear-disarmament process. It is our central belief that the Conference on Disarmament, with its fundamental principle of consensus and membership, remains the single multilateral negotiating forum. Its negotiating role must be preserved and reinforced.

We are seriously concerned about the violations of international obligations related to nuclear and ballistic programmes that threaten international peace and security and the global non-proliferation regime. In that context, we welcome the diplomatic démarches for a peaceful solution concerning the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula. We underline the need for concrete and verifiable steps by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea that demonstrate its political will to achieve complete and irreversible denuclearization.

We should continue to advocate the important role of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) with regard to the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. Accordingly, Romania would like to add its voice to those expressing support for the Agency's activities and to reaffirm our determination to continue substantially and constructively contributing to the IAEA's work. That could be regarded only as a natural progression of our firm commitment to the non-proliferation institutional framework, where the IAEA, together with the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization, plays a central role. We must support the Agency in playing its vital role of coordinating international cooperation on the global nuclear-security dialogue.

Romania intends to play its part, as it has done in the past, when such regional exercises as Olympus and Olympus Reloaded make a concrete contribution to strengthening cooperation. Romania's support for the IAEA has also been proven through its assumption of the functions of Vice-President of the IAEA General Conference, which took place in Vienna this fall. In assuming the future presidency of the Council of

the EU during the first semester of 2019, we intend to continue to play a constructive role in the nuclear domain in general, with particular focus on Vienna-based organizations that deal with such subjects as nuclear security.

My country would like to express its grave concern about the repeated use of chemical weapons in recent years, which represents a serious violation of international law and a direct threat to the global non-proliferation regime. Let me reiterate that Romania condemns in the strongest possible terms any use of chemical weapons, anywhere and under any circumstances. The use of chemical weapons is unacceptable. We should work together to better enforce the Chemical Weapons Convention and strengthen the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). The international community must ensure accountability and stand together against impunity for the use of chemical weapons. We express our strong support for enhancing the capacity of the Technical Secretariat of the OPCW to identify the perpetrators of chemical-weapon attacks. In that regard, we welcome the June decision of the special session of the Conference of the States Parties to Review the Operation of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Let me once again reaffirm that effective multilateralism is the cornerstone of international relations in our century, and that my country is resolved to fully contribute, as future President of the Council of the EU, to all efforts aimed at consolidating the international security architecture so as to achieve a safer and more secure world.

**Mr. Tun** (Myanmar): My delegation joins previous speakers in congratulating the Chair and the other members of the Bureau on their elections to lead the First Committee at its seventy-third session. We have full confidence in the Chair and the Bureau for the successful outcome of this session. We would like to assure him of the Myanmar delegation's full cooperation in the work of the Committee.

My delegation aligns itself with the statements delivered by the representatives of Indonesia and the Philippines on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), respectively (see A/C.1/73/PV.2).

Peace and security, development and human rights are mutually reinforcing. Without peace and security, the development and promotion of human rights cannot

prevail. Today we are witnessing global peace and security being seriously challenged by various threats, the number of armed conflicts has increased and tensions are rising among States. In order to respond to those challenges, we must redouble our efforts to make tangible progress in disarmament and non-proliferation negotiations. We believe that heightened tensions and dangers can be resolved through constructive political dialogue, negotiations and engagement.

While engaging in efforts for disarmament and non-proliferation, we cannot ignore the use or threat of use of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs). Among WMDs, nuclear weapons are the most dangerous and destructive weapons on Earth. Myanmar is of the view that the continued existence of nuclear weapons and their deployment is among the most serious security challenges and poses a horrible threat to the very existence of humankind and the survival of civilization.

Myanmar has been advocating a world free of nuclear weapons and is a firm supporter of the global non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. Against that backdrop, Myanmar supports the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and signed the Treaty on 26 September, which reaffirms our principled position on nuclear disarmament as one of the country's highest priorities. Myanmar never loses sight of its disarmament agenda, despite the attention it gives to its national priorities of peace and democratization.

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) remains the cornerstone of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. Myanmar reaffirms its commitment to the principles and objectives of the NPT. We call upon all parties to the NPT, particularly the nuclear-weapon States, to fully and urgently comply with their obligations under its article VI. We hope that the 2020 NPT Review Conference will be able to find a way to make progress on the full, effective and non-discriminatory implementation of the Treaty.

The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) is now over 20 years old. We call upon all States that have not yet ratified the Treaty, particularly the remaining annex 2 States, to do so. We welcome Thailand's recent ratification of the CTBT, which now means that all ASEAN member States are States parties to the Treaty.

Nuclear disarmament has been a principled objective of the United Nations since the adoption of the first General Assembly resolution (resolution

1(I)). Nuclear disarmament is the highest priority on Myanmar's disarmament agenda. We pursue a policy of the total elimination of nuclear weapons. With that conviction, Myanmar has submitted a draft resolution on nuclear disarmament at the First Committee every year since 1995. My delegation has once again submitted a draft resolution on nuclear disarmament this year (A/C.1/73/L.28). The draft resolution focuses on concrete and practical steps leading to the total elimination of nuclear weapons, thereby achieving peace and security for present and future generations.

Despite the fact that we are constantly threatened by weapons of mass destruction, we cannot underestimate the threat posed by conventional weapons, which are equally threatening to humankind. In fact, some conventional weapons harm combatants and non-combatants alike every day.

Turning to the United Nations disarmament machinery, Myanmar continues to believe that the Conference on Disarmament is the best and only multilateral disarmament negotiating forum for dealing with all matters related to disarmament and non-proliferation. The situation at the Conference depends entirely on the global peace and security environment. The Conference was in a position to substantially discuss important issues on all agenda items at its 2018 session, although it again failed to reach consensus on its programme of work. I would like to congratulate the coordinators of the subsidiary bodies for their assiduous and constructive efforts. We should build on these positive experiences to achieve concrete results during the forthcoming 2019 session in order to overcome the deadlock.

Myanmar welcomes the positive progress made on the issue of the Korean peninsula in recent months, including the convening of the inter-Korean summits and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea-United States summit. We hope that building on such progress and joint constructive work among the parties concerned will pave the way towards resolving the issue and bring about the complete and verifiable denuclearization of the Korean peninsula, which will contribute to peace and stability in the region and beyond.

Myanmar strongly supports the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones in different regions of the world, as they have contributed significantly to strengthening global nuclear disarmament. Together with other ASEAN countries, Myanmar reiterates its

commitment to preserving our region as a nuclear-weapon-free zone and free of all other weapons of mass destruction, as enshrined in the ASEAN Charter and the Treaty on the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone.

We welcome the Secretary-General's *Securing Our Common Future — An Agenda for Disarmament*. We believe that the *Agenda* plays an important role in making progress on multilateral disarmament negotiations. We share the Secretary-General's view of the need to put people at the centre of our disarmament efforts and ensure disarmament that saves lives today and tomorrow. In that regard, we request the Secretary-General to occasionally update the General Assembly and the Conference on Disarmament on the progress made on the 40 actions for the implementation plan of his disarmament agenda. We need to address the challenges to disarmament today so that we can put effective measures in place tomorrow, including guidelines and best practices.

**Mr. Nyanid** (Cameroon) (*spoke in French*): Allow me, as previous speakers have done, to convey the congratulations of my delegation to the Chair and the other members of the Bureau on their elections to guide the work of the First Committee.

According to United Nations data, there are 15,000 nuclear weapons in the world, with hundreds ready to be launched in a matter of minutes. More than 65 million people had died as a result of war and armed violence by the end of 2017. Increasingly excessive expenditures on weapons deplete resources for sustainable development. In 2017 alone, according to the United Nations, more than \$1.7 trillion were spent on arms and weapons, the largest amount since the fall of the Berlin Wall. That is approximately 80 times the amount needed to meet the entire world's humanitarian needs.

In the light of that serious trend, one of the major challenges facing the world today is that of strengthening political commitment with a view to promoting disarmament and non-proliferation efforts, to ensure that security remains a common good that is cherished and preserved by humankind. Needless to say, only such a stance can save lives and restore the confidence and energy necessary to better and calmly address the issue of sustainable development envisioned by the United Nations by 2030.

My delegation would like to reiterate that disarmament is a conflict-prevention tool, the

implementation of which was one of the very goals of the United Nations at its inception. By resolutely pursuing that aim the United Nations will be able to assert its role in the dynamics of maintaining peace and international security, as well as in the common development envisaged by its founders.

Nuclear weapons represent an immense threat to humankind owing to their very essence and potential for use. That concern is compounded by the stalling of the regime able to counter this threat. With regard to conventional weapons, it should be noted that small arms and light weapons, anti-personnel mines, cluster munitions and explosive remnants of war continue to kill and maim people and fuel armed violence. The instruments created to address the challenges posed by those weapons still need to be effectively consolidated, universalized and implemented.

Although there are numerous security challenges associated with disarmament that will continue to generate serious concern until appropriate responses are provided, the successes achieved in this area in recent years, although relative, sufficiently show that the disarmament and non-proliferation agenda can flourish only when it is addressed in a constructive and pragmatic spirit. That dynamic also serves to demonstrate that we must comprehensively seek to make the world safer. Efforts in that regard must be deployed across all fields: nuclear, chemical, biological, conventional, ballistic-missile proliferation and outer space.

Cameroon remains firmly committed to disarmament, which we deem to be an essential part of broader efforts to strengthen international peace and security. We therefore share the ultimate goal of the total elimination of nuclear weapons. For my country, disarmament must move forward by avoiding any new arms race so that security is strengthened for all. That is why the disarmament machinery — whether it pertains to biological, chemical or conventional weapons — must work towards easing regional tensions and strengthening collective security in all its aspects.

I need hardly recall that Cameroon has consistently supported all initiatives aimed at limiting nuclear weapons and reducing nuclear proliferation. Through its accession to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the Additional Protocol to the Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization,

the Convention on Early Notification of a Nuclear Accident and the Treaty of Pelindaba, to name just a few examples, Cameroon has repeatedly demonstrated its continuous desire to contribute to a more peaceful world that is free of weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons.

However, while we are resolutely committed to disarmament and non-proliferation, the need to control and manage small arms and light weapons, as well as new terrorist weapons, is of the utmost importance for developing countries such as Cameroon. It is therefore essential and urgent to make progress in our responses so as not to seriously jeopardize our development efforts.

As the Committee is aware, the urgent need to pool our efforts in combating terrorism has borne fruit in the fight against Boko Haram. Thanks to the excellent cooperation among the countries of the front-line zone of the Multinational Joint Task Force, the terrorist group has suffered a serious blow to its activities, although it has not completely lost its capacity to inflict harm. The effectiveness of our engagement in this new phase of the fight against violent extremism must be based on the synergy of coordinated actions that States must take to create the right conditions for sustainable growth and to block recruitment by terrorists. Like all the countries neighbouring Lake Chad, Cameroon will spare no effort in working towards that goal. My country knows that it can count on the support of the international community in the just fight against this dark cloud, and calls for greater cooperation and solidarity.

States have agreed on the need to take into account legislative, institutional and regulatory measures for the implementation of the Kinshasa Convention. In that regard, recommendations were included in a final report, the annex of which was entitled “Yaoundé declaration on the circulation of small arms and light weapons in Central Africa”. States parties are currently working on the follow-up to and implementation of the Kinshasa Convention through the establishment of its secretariat, to be provided by the Economic Community of Central African States, and the adoption of relevant national institutions by each State. Cameroon thanks the United Nations and its international partners for their continued support for the fight against the proliferation of small arms and light weapons.

**Ms. Fofana** (Burkina Faso) (*spoke in French*): Echoing the other delegations that have spoken before me, I ask the Chair to accept my warmest

congratulations on his election to the chairmanship of the First Committee. I assure him of the full support of my delegation. I also congratulate the other members of the Bureau,

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).

The seventy-third session is being held against a backdrop that is characterized by multiple challenges and uncertainties affecting the maintenance of international peace and security. Burkina Faso attaches great importance to multilateral efforts in the field of disarmament and will continue to support all efforts to that end. In that regard, my delegation welcomes the Secretary-General’s *Securing Our Common Future — An Agenda for Disarmament*, which places disarmament and non-proliferation at the heart of the work of the Organization, which has the primary objective of maintaining international peace and security, as reflected by the adoption of the first resolution of the General Assembly in 1946 (resolution 1(I)).

We must recall that nuclear weapons are a threat to humankind due to their immense humanitarian consequences. We must therefore spare no effort in building a world free of nuclear weapons that is less inclined to participate in arms races at the expense of meeting the requirements of fighting poverty, numerous pandemics and disasters linked to global warming, and of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. I take this opportunity to reiterate our concern about the steady increase in military spending, the willingness to acquire nuclear weapons and the modernization of existing stockpiles thereof.

The adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, on 7 July 2017, made it possible to prohibit nuclear weapons and complement the legal disarmament architecture. With regard to other weapons of mass destruction, my delegation calls for the universalization of the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological Weapons Convention. Furthermore, we are also concerned about the resurgence in the use of chemical weapons in recent years. While advances in technology and biology benefit humankind, they still present us with many challenges. Outer space is another

subject of concern to the international community, and we must continue our efforts to avoid its militarization.

As a State party to the Treaty of Pelindaba, my country welcomes the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones as a disarmament and non-proliferation measure. Such zones are vitally important to strengthening international peace and security. My delegation therefore calls for the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East, in accordance with the 1995 resolution and the 2010 Action Plan of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

Moreover, my delegation reaffirms the importance and value of the Comprehensive-Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. We share the view that the commencement of negotiations for a fissile material cut-off treaty and the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty are vital. As such, my delegation calls on annex 2 States to sign and ratify the Treaty to enable its entry into force. In that regard, we welcome the holding, on 20 September 2017, of the tenth Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

Burkina Faso is alarmed by the illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons, which threatens peace, security and stability in various parts of the world, including the Sahelo-Saharan strip. Those weapons fuel numerous conflicts, criminal organizations and terrorist groups, while causing enormous suffering and human disasters. They are, among other things, a serious threat to the stability of States and a hindrance to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

In that regard, the Arms Trade Treaty provides an appropriate and collective response by regulating and stabilizing the international transfer in conventional arms. My delegation welcomed the convening of the fourth Conference of States Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty, held in Tokyo in August, and calls for its full implementation through transparency, cooperation and universalization mechanisms. Moreover, my delegation welcomes the inclusion of munitions in the outcome document 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 New York in June.

Three years after the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, my country would like to recall the link between disarmament and development and take this opportunity to call on the international community to further engage in a process of disarmament that would free up financial resources for development.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate the importance that Burkina Faso attaches to all disarmament issues and to recall that, even if challenges seem immense, we have the duty to pool our efforts to provide a safer world for future generations.

**Mr. Ornai** (Timor-Leste): At the outset, I would also like to join other delegations in congratulating the Chair on his election to the chairmanship of the First Committee at its seventy-third session. We are certain that, under his capable leadership, the work of the Committee will be brought to a successful conclusion.

Timor-Leste aligns itself with the statement delivered by the Indonesian delegation on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/73.PV.2).

My delegation welcomes the inter-Korean summit in May and the North Korean-United States summit in June and the reduction of tensions on the Korean peninsula. Timor-Leste congratulates all the parties concerned and believes that further dialogue will substantially contribute to meaningful outcomes, including the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula.

To commemorate the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons, on 26 September, Timor-Leste joined other Member States in signing the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. The Treaty is an important international humanitarian norm for our collective security, peace and the preservation of human life on our planet. My delegation encourages Member States that have not signed the Treaty to do so and to also consider signing and ratifying other relevant treaties on disarmament that pertain to international security.

As a State party to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction, Timor-Leste condemns the use of chemical weapons in Syria and the indiscriminate suffering their use has brought about for the civilian population, in particular women and children. My delegation takes note of the report



of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons on the incident that took place on 24 and 25 March 2017 in Ltamenah, in which it confirms the use of sarin and chlorine.

Timor-Leste continues to promote international legal instruments and United Nations resolutions on disarmament and international security, which we consider to be fundamental for sustainable development. Without peace and security, we will not be able to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals. Therefore, Timor-Leste, together with the other 19 member States of the Group of Seven Plus, continues to promote peacebuilding and State-building as fundamental guarantees for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, especially cross-cutting Goal 16, on the nexus among peace, justice and strong institutions and sustainable development.

Timor-Leste strongly believes in upholding the international legal order and the use of international mechanisms, dialogue and diplomatic efforts for the peaceful settlement of disputes between States. To that end, we wish to highlight the use of compulsory conciliation under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, which resulted in the signing of a bilateral agreement between Timor-Leste and Australia on the delimitation of maritime boundaries.

International conflicts are changing dramatically today, while new international threats of a non-conventional nature are emerging that involve non-State actors and transcend national boundaries. We therefore believe that collective responses and collaborative partnerships are needed to address those enormous global threats.

With regard to Security Council resolution 1540 (2004), which prohibits States from providing support to non-State actors in their efforts to acquire, use or transfer nuclear, chemical, biological weapons and their delivery systems, Timor-Leste submitted its report in 2017, in accordance with the resolution, and continues to promote and disseminate the resolution at the national level in order to promote its awareness among the people of Timor-Leste. My country also joined other Member States in signing the Code of Conduct towards Achieving a World Free of Terrorism, on 28 September, during the seventy-third high-level week of the General Assembly. We believe that the Code of Conduct can further contribute to collective peace and security,

which is an important basis for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda.

In conclusion, my delegation looks forward to working closely with the experts of the Committee to comply with international legal instruments on disarmament, international security and combating terrorism, while assuming its part in shared responsibility and collective security.

**Mr. Perera** (Sri Lanka): The delegation of Sri Lanka wishes to join all other delegations in congratulating the Chair and the other members of the Bureau on their elections.

The issue of disarmament remains more critical than ever. The world continues to be affected by violent conflict and weapons of mass destruction, nuclear weapons, chemical weapons and biological weapons that are extant and in use, along with other controversial weapons, such as cluster munitions, while brutal acts of terrorism and violent extremism continue to be on the increase. In addition, the influence of technology has triggered an exponential increase in new challenges in the security sphere, including cybercrime and cyberwarfare. Against that backdrop, geopolitical dynamics are increasingly fractious and a common vision for and a global commitment to complete disarmament grows more and more elusive.

Sri Lanka continues to stand firm in its commitment to the non-proliferation and eradication of all nuclear weapons. In that regard, we reiterate that the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons remains the bedrock multilateral nuclear-arms-control agreement. Sri Lanka was one of the first States to sign both the Non-Proliferation Treaty, in 1968, and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, in 1996. We have been and continue to be a stalwart supporter of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which was adopted last year.

Sri Lanka stands strong in its conviction that the threat of nuclear weapons persists as one of the most daunting challenges to humankind. It is one that requires urgent, concerted and committed action from all of us as Member States. We therefore urge all States to continue taking steps towards a world free of nuclear weapons.

It is a well-established fact that cluster munitions pose severe humanitarian threats and have social and developmental consequences. The method of

deployment of those explosives means that they are indiscriminate and unable to distinguish between military targets and civilians, which is in clear violation of the cardinal principles of international humanitarian law. In addition, the grave danger they pose is enduring, with many turning into de facto landmines, with the capacity to indiscriminately kill and maim long after conflict has ended. Sri Lanka is unequivocally committed to the cause of ending the use and prevalence of those destructive, indiscriminate and inhumane weapons.

In that regard, we reaffirm the importance of the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM), which Sri Lanka acceded to in March. Sri Lanka assumed the presidency of the ninth Meeting of States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions last month and, in keeping with past practice, in that capacity is taking the lead in submitting a draft resolution this year entitled "Implementation of the Convention on Cluster Munitions" (A/C.1/73/L.39). Sri Lanka also held a side event last week, here in New York, to promote the universalization of the CCM. We were encouraged by the wide attendance by Member States at the event. Having already acceded to the Ottawa Treaty banning anti-personnel mines, we look forward to demonstrating similar commitment and action as part of the vision to eradicate cluster munitions.

Sri Lanka remains committed to preventing, curbing and eradicating the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. Such flows are often a factor behind the forced displacement of civilians and massive human rights violations. We must work to create conditions for addressing all the relevant dimensions of the problem of illicit small arms, including weapons-collection and destruction, adequate legal and policy frameworks, institutional arrangements, proper stockpile management and education and awareness.

Finally, we continue to reaffirm our commitment to protect outer space as a common good of humankind and to take measures for the peaceful use of outer space and the prevention of an arms race in outer space. We reaffirm our recognition that the exploration and use of outer space should be carried out for the benefit and in the interests of all countries. Towards that goal, the existing legal framework on outer space must be reinforced and strengthened.

Sri Lanka reaffirms its commitment to the disarmament agenda and continues to pledge its

full support and commitment to the multilateral disarmament machinery. My delegation looks forward to meaningful and constructive engagement on the issues I have referred to, and others, during this session of the First Committee and to continue working towards reinforcing and enhancing the global agenda for peace and disarmament.

**Mr. Bessedik** (Algeria): I would like to begin by congratulating the Chair on his election to the chairmanship of the current session of the First Committee, as well as the other members of the Bureau. They can count on the full support of my delegation.

My delegation aligns itself with the statements made by the representatives of Indonesia, Morocco and Egypt on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, the Group of African States and the Group of Arab States, respectively (see A/C.1/73/PV.2).

As a State party to the main treaties related to weapons of mass destruction (WMDs), Algeria reaffirms that nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation remain its highest priorities and expresses its determination to work towards achieving a world free of nuclear weapons and to eliminate the danger of use or threat of use posed to humankind by the continued existence of these weapons.

I take this opportunity to reaffirm the long-standing principled position of Algeria with regard to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the cornerstone of the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime. I would once more like to stress the need for its full implementation and complete compliance with each of its three pillars in a balanced manner. In that regard, while calling upon all States that are not yet party to the Treaty to join it without delay or precondition, we reaffirm the need for the nuclear-weapon States to fulfil their obligations under the NPT. Furthermore, we call upon the nuclear-weapon States to demonstrate the political will necessary to enable the 2020 NPT Review Conference to achieve concrete recommendations for achieving nuclear disarmament, which is the ultimate objective of the NPT.

In that regard, Algeria reaffirms that the total elimination of nuclear weapons is the only absolute guarantee against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. It was therefore only logical that Algeria adhered to the humanitarian pledge and was among the first countries to sign the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons last year, as a necessary step towards

the total elimination of nuclear weapons. Moreover, we regret that, more than two decades since the opening for signature of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), the CTBT has yet to enter into force. We call upon those States that have not yet done so, particularly annex 2 States, to ratify it without further delay.

In that context, my delegation wishes to once again reiterate the need for the conclusion of a legally binding instrument on negative security assurances for all non-nuclear-weapon States. Algeria welcomes the adoption by consensus of the report of the high-level fissile material cut-off treaty expert preparatory group (see A/73/159), and hopes that the substantial elements of the report will constitute a basis for future negotiations on the issue.

My delegation has always strongly supported all initiatives aimed at establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones around the world, as they constitute concrete steps towards strengthening global nuclear disarmament and nuclear-non-proliferation norms and consolidate international efforts aimed at achieving peace and security. In that context, Algeria reaffirms that the Treaty of Pelindaba, which establishes a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Africa, represents an important contribution to the strengthening of international and regional peace and security.

In the same vein, we call on all Member States, especially the sponsors of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East, to support the constructive proposal submitted by the Arab Group to convene a United Nations conference in 2019 to negotiate a legally binding treaty on the establishment of a WMD-free zone in the region. We highly appreciate and commend the support expressed for that proposal thus far by the majority of Member States.

Concerning the other instruments related to weapons of mass destruction, Algeria considers the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) to be important components of the international legal architecture and calls for their balanced, effective and non-discriminatory implementation. We also call for enhancing international cooperation to allow for the transfer of chemical and biological technologies, particularly to developing countries. Equally important for my delegation is the need to establish a verification mechanism of the BWC to ensure that States parties'

obligations are fulfilled and to counter the threat of bioterrorism.

With regard to the United Nations disarmament machinery, my delegation considers that a lack of political will is the clear reason for the regrettable deadlock that continues to characterize the work of the Conference on Disarmament, and calls upon Member States to agree on a balanced and comprehensive programme of work. Furthermore, Algeria calls upon all Member States to demonstrate the political will and flexibility needed to allow the United Nations Disarmament Commission to make substantial and consensual recommendations on nuclear disarmament during its current cycle.

With regard to conventional weapons, the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons supplies terrorist groups and organized crime and is indeed a major concern for my country. In that context, Algeria expresses its satisfaction with the outcome of the third Review Conference on the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and looks forward to further actions to eliminate the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons.

Let me conclude by highlighting that my delegation wishes to inform the Committee that it will submit its annual draft resolution on strengthening security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region (A/C.1/73/L.30) in the course of this session and seeks the support of all delegations.

**Ms. Cerrato** (Honduras) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, my delegation wishes to congratulate the Chair on his election to steer the work of this important Committee, as well as the other members of the Bureau. I also take this opportunity to assure the First Committee of my country's commitment to achieving the best results in our deliberations.

Honduras, like other Member States that preceded it, aligns itself with the statements made by the representative of El Salvador, on behalf of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (see A/C.1/73/PV.4), and the representative of Indonesia, on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/73/PV.2).

During the seventy-third session of the General Assembly, it is important to recognize the need to prevent conflicts and their effects, as that will allow

us to focus on achieving development. That is why we wish to highlight the excellent work of all those involved in the progress made to date in the implementation, review and monitoring of and compliance with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, specifically Development Goal 16 and the important role of women, young people and children in this area.

Honduras has always supported action aimed at strengthening the disarmament and non-proliferation regime, as well as all efforts to renew the international community's commitment to safeguarding international peace and security and progress towards the total elimination of weapons of mass destruction through multilateral negotiations and under the principles of verification, irreversibility and transparency.

As proof of my country's commitment to disarmament, we joined the Convention on Cluster Munitions, signed and will soon ratify the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and actively participated in the Conference on Disarmament and in celebrating the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons during this session. Moreover, Honduras welcomed the adoption of the outcome document of the third Review Conference on the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, which includes the 2018 declaration, the proposed plan for the implementation of the Programme of Action for the period 2018-2024 and the plan on the implementation of the International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons, which covers the period 2018-2024.

Honduras advocates the application of the International Tracing Instrument, the implementation of the Programme of Action for the period 2018-2024 and a reduction in the production of and expenditures on, small arms and light weapons. For my delegation, all of those instruments and action plans are of the utmost importance to combating organized crime, dismantling criminal structures, putting an end to drug trafficking and eradicating terrorism perpetrated by such non-State actors as the mobs and gangs that cause serious harm to my country and the Central American region.

In order to regulate and contribute to the prevention of armed conflict, violence, human rights abuses and violations of international humanitarian

law, Honduras ratified the Arms Trade Treaty in 2017 and has ratified other treaties at the regional level that highlight the Inter-American Convention against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives and Other Related Materials. Likewise, with the objective of establishing and strengthening operational coordination mechanisms among the competent institutions at the national and regional levels and to jointly fight crime, Honduras and the other member countries of the Central American Integration System are analysing technical guidelines to develop regulations on the exchange and transfer of information concerning regional arms flows.

The commitment undertaken by Honduras in signing the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which will soon be ratified, is another sign of our continued efforts to reduce the number of such weapons and progressively establish increasingly large geographical regions that are free from nuclear weapons, such as the Latin American region — made possible by the Treaty of Tlatelolco, of which my country is a signatory. Nuclear-weapon-free zones are an important contribution to eliminating weapons of mass destruction and represent a solid basis for the development of a universal ban on nuclear weapons. Honduras hopes that, with each passing day, the areas where nuclear weapons still exist will become fewer and farther between, in order to better comply with the principle of peace among nations, which is the essence of the Charter of the United Nations.

We underline the importance of adhering to the Chemical Weapons Convention and all treaties and conventions that have been established with the aim of achieving a world free of weapons of mass destruction. In the same vein, Honduras advocates greater international cooperation and assistance for developing countries, especially in terms of technology transfer, sharing of experience, training the relevant officials, promoting the peaceful use of nuclear energy and cooperation with nuclear-weapon-free zones.

In conclusion, Honduras also expresses its support for the exploration and use of outer space, be it for peaceful purposes or scientific, social or economic development, which can contribute to the well-being of humankind. I wish to once again reiterate the commitment of Honduras to the work of the Committee. We hope that, under the leadership of the Chair, this will be a fruitful session. For that, he can count on the full support of my delegation.

**Mrs. Dallafior** (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): First of all, allow me to congratulate the Chair on being elected to chair the First Committee. He can be assured of the full support of my delegation.

In *Securing our Common Future — An Agenda for Disarmament* the Secretary-General underscores the need for disarmament to be at the core of the work of the United Nations. We fully agree with that view, as efforts in the area of disarmament not only help to promote international peace and security, but also play an important role in supporting the Sustainable Development Goals. To that end, development considerations should be more closely integrated in our own work.

We believe that several other considerations of the Secretary-General are crucial to the work of the Committee. The international security environment is deteriorating and becoming increasingly complex. In particular, various decisions and developments have resulted in a deterioration of security and strategic relations among major Powers. As the Secretary-General points out, efforts in the area of international security and disarmament take on even greater importance in that context. The international order based on a set of rules shared by the community of States is under stress. The repeated use of chemical weapons in the Syrian conflict and other situations is a serious violation of international law. Once again, we strongly condemn any use of such weapons and call for those responsible to be brought to justice. Other norms and treaties also face serious challenges. Countering that trend and strengthening the relevant legal norms and regimes should be a priority.

Non-combatants pay a particularly heavy toll in today's armed conflicts. As the Secretary-General underscores, our disarmament efforts should seek especially to mitigate the humanitarian impact of conventional arms.

The Secretary-General's *Agenda for Disarmament* reminds us of the importance of our duty and the need to work constructively to address the challenges we face. Protecting humankind from the dangers posed by nuclear weapons makes nuclear disarmament a top priority. We fully share the view expressed by the Secretary-General about the need to return to a common vision and path shared by all towards their total elimination. Such an approach will be critical to safeguarding the global nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation

regime, beginning with its cornerstone, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

The preventive dimension of disarmament, underlined by the Secretary-General, is particularly significant with regard to nuclear disarmament. We fully support his call on all States to collectively affirm that it is in the interest of national, collective and human security that nuclear weapons never be used again, regardless of the circumstances. The need to prevent any use of nuclear weapons should also lead us to take concrete measures to mitigate the risks they present, in particular in the light of disturbing developments with respect to nuclear capabilities and doctrines.

The Secretary-General's agenda also serves as a reminder that, in the field of conventional arms, disarmament saves lives. In that regard, we are particularly concerned about the impact of armed conflicts on civilians, in particular in connection with the growing urbanization of conflict and the increased use of improvised explosive devices. Strengthening the implementation of and full respect for international humanitarian law must remain a primary objective. The agenda proposes a number of concrete, practical approaches in that regard — for instance, inquiries into the legality of any new weapons system. We regard several other measures put forward by the Secretary-General on conventional weapons, such as ensuring the safe and secure management of ammunition, as being essential. Moreover, we wish to point out that conventional-arms-control efforts are particularly important for increasing regional security, notably transparency and confidence building measures. Switzerland intends to further its efforts to promote a robust regional security architecture in Europe.

The final point I wish to make concerns the acceleration of developments in science and technology. While such advances offer promising opportunities, they also raise new challenges in the field of international security. For example, controlling the development and spread of new technologies is particularly problematic. Some of those technologies could contribute to a new arms race, especially in the area of strategic weapons. Moreover, the rapid pace of such developments raises questions about the application and observance of existing international law and the need to adopt new norms.

To address the challenges posed by such developments, international bodies dealing with

security issues must be able to rely on the necessary expertise. In that context, we welcome in particular the Secretary-General's report to the Committee on current developments in science and technology and their potential impact on international security and disarmament efforts (A/73/177), pursuant to resolution 72/28. The report constitutes an important basis for making progress in that area during our session.

Although some elements of the agenda can be quickly achieved, others will require long-term commitment. We have taken note of the implementation plan for the agenda recently published by the Office for Disarmament Affairs. It will be important for us to work together to ensure that it is realized. Switzerland intends to make an active contribution to that effort.

**Mr. Kadiri** (Morocco) (*spoke in French*): First of all, allow me to congratulate you, Madam, on your election to serve as a member of the Bureau of this important Committee and assure you of my delegation's support as you carry out your duties. I also congratulate all of the other members of the Bureau on their elections.

The Moroccan delegation aligns itself with the statements delivered on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, the Group of African States and the Group of Arab States (see A/C.1/73/PV.2) and would like to make some remarks in its national capacity.

The work of the First Committee takes place in an international context that continues to be marked by an increasing number of challenges to peace, security, stability and the development of members of the international community. Today more than ever, the unbridled spread of multifaceted threats, non-State actors and armed groups exacerbates the risk of nuclear proliferation and the use of lethal weapons. Above and beyond the suffering they cause, such elements seriously undermine international, regional and national efforts to counter the threats. They also jeopardize prospects for lasting peace in our societies and any objectives for achieving durable socioeconomic development, such as the Sustainable Development Goals. Nonetheless, instead of resorting to another arms race, contemporary crises also present opportunities for the international community to recommit to resuming dialogue and ensuring that multilateralism prevails.

That is why Morocco welcomes the many recent positive signs in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation, in particular the constructive and in-depth discussions at the third Review Conference on

the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects; the success achieved in discussions on conventional weapons at the United Nations Disarmament Commission, which enabled the work of the Commission to emerge from a 17-year impasse; the adoption, in July 2017, of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons; and the decision of the Conference on Disarmament to set up five subsidiary bodies for in-depth discussions and expanding areas of convergence.

All of that progress provides a measure of confidence that should be encouraged and replicated in the contemporary global context. That is why Morocco fully supports the reform efforts initiated by the Secretary-General, including as set out in *Securing our Common Future — An Agenda for Disarmament*, which aims to enable our Organization to respond appropriately to the challenges we all face. It is that spirit of renewed commitment that should also prevail in the international community's efforts when investing in the new frontiers of outer space or cyberspace to enable humankind to take advantage of its common heritage.

It is clear that, above and beyond their use and threat of use, the very existence of lethal weapons continues to exact a human, environmental and security toll that could be prevented if the international community were to demonstrate genuine political will — and that would depend upon our firm commitment to the disarmament and non-proliferation security architecture. Morocco therefore wishes to reiterate its commitment to achieving the objectives of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), which remains the cornerstone of the non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament regime and a key instrument in preserving international peace and security. Morocco also recalls the inalienable right of States parties to the NPT to the peaceful use of nuclear energy for development purposes, through, in particular, international cooperation, under the supervision of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

My country continues to support the prompt entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, with a view to achieving a world free of nuclear weapons. In that regard, Morocco deplores the fact that the implementation of the resolution on the application of IAEA safeguards in the Middle East has stalled for many years. In addition, my country regrets the postponement of the 2012 conference to establish

a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East and would like to see that goal achieved in 2019. Morocco supports the draft decision submitted by the Arab Group in that regard, which is in the interest of the collective security of all States in the region.

Lastly, the existence and illicit circulation of lethal weapons constitutes a scourge that fuels and prolongs conflict, terrorism, including nuclear terrorism, and trafficking of all kinds and affects the sovereignty of States, as well as the most vulnerable groups in society, such as women, children and young people. The current international context and increasing number of challenges make it imperative to achieve the disarmament and non-proliferation goals. It is on that basis that the international community must preserve the consensus and revive the virtues of multilateral negotiation.

**The Acting Chair:** I now give the floor to the observer of the Holy See.

**Father Charters (Holy See):** As this is the first time the Holy See is taking the floor in the First Committee this year, allow me to congratulate the Chair on his election and to pledge our full cooperation in the vital work of the Committee.

A year has passed since the adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. The Holy See signed and ratified the Treaty during the 20 September 2017 signing ceremony because the Treaty gives hope to this generation and to those still to be born that one day our world will be free from nuclear weapons, which for more than 70 years have daunted humankind's aspirations for peace. The Holy See believes that the Treaty meets the challenge Pope Francis expressed in his message to the negotiating conference, namely, to adopt forward-looking strategies to promote the goal of peace and stability and to avoid short-sighted approaches to the problems surrounding national and international security. The States that signed the Treaty rejected the fallacy that might makes right, and its pernicious modern corollary that some nations have the right to nuclear weapons while others do not. On the contrary, in adhering to the Treaty, they affirmed that the achievement and maintenance of international peace and security consist in what supports the common good of all humankind.

The strategies of deterrence on which some nations rely are deeply flawed. For a couple of decades, some

nuclear-armed States made significant cuts in nuclear weapons and delivery systems. Such reductions have halted, however, and in what some are calling a new Cold War, the process risks going into reverse. Strategic doctrine, moreover, does not limit itself to the deterrence aspects of nuclear weapons, but rather continues to embrace the possible use of such weapons for a variety of military goals, even against non-nuclear aggression. For those reasons, Pope Francis last November declared,

“The threat of the use of nuclear weapons, as well as their very possession, is to be firmly condemned.”

The abolition of nuclear weapons is an ethical imperative of the first order.

Following the Cuban missile crisis, in October 1962, Pope John XXIII wrote that the world could not expect to abolish the nuclear arms race

“unless the process is complete and thorough, unless it proceeds from inner conviction, unless, that is, everyone sincerely cooperates to banish the fear and anxious expectation of war with which humanity oppressed”.

Pope John concluded,

“The true and solid peace of nations consists not in equality of arms but in mutual trust alone”.

The abolition of nuclear weapons requires that profound change of perspective, indeed a metanoia, that is, a change of heart. Only with such a conversion of moral outlook will negotiation, disarmament, verification and the other necessary programmatic components of abolition yield the harvest of a non-nuclear peace: — a world free of nuclear weapons. Disarmament implemented on the basis of a change of fundamental attitude, a movement from fear to trust, is what Pope Francis means by integral disarmament. To build that new culture of peace, extensive investment in peace and disarmament education is needed.

Even if it begins with an extensive preamble on humanitarian concerns and recommendations for victim assistance and environmental remediation, the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons nonetheless stipulates few steps for disarmament. In particular, the international authority designated to negotiate and verify the elimination of nuclear arsenals needs to be designed. Establishing the goal of nuclear abolition is not enough; the means to achieve it are also

needed. The elimination of nuclear weapons requires the establishment of a global public authority, endowed with a wideness of powers, structure and means to operate in an effective manner on a worldwide basis. The establishment of such an authority ought to be high on the agenda of the first Treaty review conference.

Within months of the adoption of the Treaty, and in spite of the widespread support it enjoyed, the world was alarmed by the escalation of talk of a nuclear war. With some relief, we have observed the reduction of the risk of war on the Korean peninsula, along with confidence-building measures and those expressions of friendship that always accompany the quest for denuclearization. At this point, the mutual engagement of the two Koreas shows some promise of developing into an integral process in which disarmament is linked to building up peaceful and mutually beneficial relations. By contrast, the effort to undo the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action with Iran is cause for concern. Although the Plan may not be to the full satisfaction of all interested parties, and while more acceptable terms to all parties may be reached through continued negotiations, it can and should continue to serve to obtain assurances of the exclusively peaceful nature of the nuclear programme of the State in question.

As we look ahead to the 2020 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), there is an urgent need to address the problems presented by breakaway and undeclared nuclear-weapon States. Amid the chaos and destruction of the Middle East, prudence demands that Member States revive the quest for a Middle East nuclear-weapon-free zone. Above all, the world expects the nuclear-weapon States to fully implement their obligations under NPT article VI for nuclear and general disarmament.

In conclusion, the preamble of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons states,

“the establishment and maintenance of world peace and security are to be promoted with the least diversion for armaments of the world’s human and economic resources”.

Likewise, Sustainable Development Goal 16 aims to promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels. The Holy See urges Governments to consider reallocating a sizable portion of the savings

from disarmament for the development of their own citizens and of the world’s poor. In addition, the Holy See would urge the international authority designated by the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons to include among the terms of disarmament for new signatories the reallocation of funding from nuclear armaments to sustainable development as an element of disarmament planning.

Pope Francis has said, we need to reject the culture of waste and to care for individuals and peoples labouring under painful disparities through patient efforts to favour processes of solidarity over selfish and contingent interests. As swords are beaten into ploughshares, the poor and the vulnerable can rightly expect that integral disarmament should yield fruit in integral development.

Finally, my delegation believes that the document *Securing our Common Future — An Agenda for Disarmament* could provide important insights and recommendations for us as we address the full agenda of disarmament challenges.

**The Acting Chair:** I now give the floor to the Secretary-General of the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean.

**Mr. De Macedo Soares** (Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean): On behalf of the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (OPANAL), I express our congratulations to you, Madam, to the Chair of the First Committee and to the other members of the Bureau.

On 26 September, the States members of OPANAL issued a declaration on the occasion of the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons, as they have done for the past five years since the General Assembly established the Day in 2013. The declaration expresses the consensus of all 33 Latin American and Caribbean States on the main aspects concerning the non-proliferation and disarmament of nuclear weapons. Latin America and the Caribbean is the only region of the world that regularly announces a joint position on issues that are central to the First Committee. That reflects a remarkable unanimity, which — we have no doubt — is noted by all States Members of the United Nations, and in particular by nuclear-weapon States and their allies. The fact that the 33 States can make a common declaration is rooted in the creation, more



than 50 years ago, of an instrument of international law known as the nuclear-weapon-free zone.

Besides serving as a permanent forum that allows the expression of common stands by States parties, OPANAL is also in charge of ensuring the effectiveness of the Treaty of Tlatelolco, which also requires that the nuclear-weapon States and States administering, *de jure* or *de facto*, territories in the region concur for the full implementation of the Treaty. They undertook obligations by signing and ratifying additional protocols to the Treaty of Tlatelolco. That implies respecting the military denuclearization of the zone and providing guarantees to the States parties that they will not be subjected to the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. Unfortunately, by means of interpretative declarations, which are in fact reservations, the commitments of some of the States parties to the protocols have been limited.

Since 2016, OPANAL has been offering those States a way out of that problem by proposing the signing of adjustments to the protocols, which would eliminate misunderstandings and ensure full respect of the Treaty. OPANAL member States are not proposing that the nuclear-weapon States undertake any new commitments, other than a common understanding. Two of the nuclear-weapon States concerned have responded to our adjustments proposal, albeit in a flat-out negative fashion. Another of those States has not even agreed to receiving the representatives of the five member States of the OPANAL Council so we can present our proposal. A fourth nuclear-weapon State object of the *démarche* has not yet responded. It seems to be a strange way to conduct normal *bona fide* relations. Protocols to other treaties establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones have also been subject to reservations. The nuclear-weapon States should be open to reconsidering the scope of their reservations in agreement with States belonging to nuclear-weapon-free zones.

The five nuclear-weapon-free zones and Mongolia include 116 States. Today more than ever, the political capital represented by nuclear-weapon-free zones must be used to strengthen the non-proliferation regime. The conferences of the parties and signatories to the treaties establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones are an excellent opportunity to articulate the common voice of the majority of the international community. OPANAL is already preparing to hold a successful fourth conference of the nuclear-weapon-free zones and Mongolia in 2020. We expect that the fourth conference will not only reiterate the common position of its 116

participating countries but also adopt arrangements to make contact and collaboration among them more permanent and effective.

**The Acting Chair:** I now give the floor to the representative of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization.

**Mr. Rosenberg** (Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization): On behalf of the Executive Secretary, Mr. Lassina Zerbo, first allow me to congratulate the Chair on his election to preside over the First Committee at its seventy-third session, as well as to all the other members of the Bureau.

I am particularly pleased to highlight that we recently welcomed the ratification by Thailand and the signature by Tuvalu of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, thereby bringing the number of State signatories to 184, and ratifying States to 167. I wish to thank the Governments of Thailand and Tuvalu for their support and resolve, which has fostered international efforts to achieve a nuclear-test-free world. I should like to mention that the New York Liaison Office of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO) continues to work closely with most delegations, in particular non-annex 2 countries, that are still in the process of signing and ratifying the Treaty, several of which are represented here today.

By all accounts, the CTBT has succeeded in its objectives. The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) enjoys near-universal support and has solidified the *de facto* international norm against nuclear testing. Since the Treaty opened for signature, in 1996, only three countries have violated that norm and only one country has carried out a nuclear test during this century.

With regard to the Treaty's verification regime, the CTBTO Preparatory Commission has demonstrated its technical capabilities for providing effective verification to monitor a prohibition on nuclear tests. The International Monitoring System, made up of 337 facilities around the world, has truly global reach and is supported by the International Data Centre in Vienna that continuously processes and analyses data. Moreover, the on-site inspection regime, designed as a final verification mechanism in instances of possible non-compliance, has reached a high level of operational readiness.

In addition to monitoring compliance with the Treaty, CTBT data and technologies have been utilized for civil and scientific purposes, such as in the areas of disaster risk mitigation and climate-change monitoring, and can contribute to sustainable development. However, those achievements must not obscure the challenges that still lie ahead. We should remember that the CTBT has not yet come into force, preventing the Treaty from becoming a legally binding and enforceable final barrier against nuclear testing.

Disarmament and non-proliferation are highly challenging tasks that require creative global solutions and the active engagement of stakeholders from every corner of the world. In particular, educational initiatives to promote awareness and build capacities among the next generation of experts must be encouraged and supported. The voices and ideas of the youth of today are crucial to achieving a future free from the threat of nuclear weapons. In that regard, the CTBTO held the second CTBT Science Diplomacy Symposium in Vienna to educate and engage the next generation of nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament experts. During two weeks of dynamic discussions and hands-on exercises, the Symposium created an opportunity for over 350 participants, including students, academics, diplomats and technical experts from more than 100 countries, to gain an in-depth understanding of the Treaty and its verification regime. I am proud to say that the New York Liaison Office was very active in ensuring the participation of delegations represented here today and of delegations from their capitals. I think it was a very constructive exercise for everyone.

The CTBTO's efforts to raise awareness about the Treaty have continued in New York as well. Since its establishment last year, the CTBTO's New York Liaison Office, which I have the honour to head, has helped cultivate and enhance relationships with the 193 States Member of the United Nations and various entities represented in New York. For example, last March the Office hosted the first seminar for disarmament representatives to the First Committee, in conjunction with the United Nations Institute for Training and Research, in which several members of the Committee participated. The seminar, which aimed to provide general information on the Treaty and the verification regime, coincided with a photo exhibition on the CTBT and the interactive Omni Globe, which visualizes the CTBTO's global verification network and helps promote understanding of its uses and benefits. Those capacity-

building exercises and visual presentations have helped to generate attention and further knowledge about the Treaty and the CTBTO, not only among the Permanent Missions but also among the general public.

In the light of the recent announcement by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea that it is committed to inviting international inspectors to confirm a closure of its nuclear-test site, allow me reaffirm that, with the approval of our member States, the CTBTO stands ready to contribute its expertise, technologies and monitoring assets to any multilateral process aimed at confirming the closure of the Punggye-ri nuclear-test site. We sincerely hope that that recent development on the Korean peninsula will lead to a comprehensive and verifiable agreement that would include the signature and ratification of the CTBT by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, thereby encouraging other remaining States that need to ratify the Treaty and advancing its entry into force.

Since the opening for signature of the CTBT, more than 20 years ago, we have never ceased in our endeavours to achieve a permanent, effectively verifiable and credibly enforceable prohibition on nuclear-test explosions. We have developed our infrastructure for the verification regime and provided States with trust and confidence in the Treaty. After decades of consistent efforts and hard work, we have much to be proud of. As we view the current state of affairs in the field of nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament, there is a compelling case that the Treaty is the most practical and achievable step towards a world free of nuclear weapons.

Now it is up to the Member States to redouble their efforts to finish what we started and bring about the entry into force of the CTBT. We call upon all members of the international community to take urgent action to contribute to a world free from the threat of nuclear weapons through their adherence to, and support for, the Treaty. The world is waiting for the leadership of the United Nations. Let us work together to achieve real progress towards banning nuclear tests and bring us one critical step closer to realizing the lasting peace and security of a nuclear weapon-free world.

**The Acting Chair:** I now give the floor to the Permanent Observer of the Observer State of Palestine.

**Mr. Mansour (Palestine):** On behalf of the State of Palestine, allow me first to congratulate you and the other members of the Bureau on being elected to lead

this session of the First Committee and to assure them of our full cooperation.

The State of Palestine aligns itself with the statements made by the representative of Indonesia, on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and by the representative of Egypt, on behalf of the Group of Arab States (see A/C.1/73/PV.2).

The human race is the first species to develop instruments that could lead to its own extinction. More than 70 years after nuclear weapons were first used, we have a moral and legal imperative to ensure the total elimination of nuclear weapons to safeguard us from the existential threat and catastrophic humanitarian consequences posed by such weapons. All weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) must be prohibited, as their use is incompatible, at all times and under all circumstances, with the rules of international law, notably international humanitarian law.

There are a number of key international humanitarian law principles. They include the principle of humanity, the principle that the right of parties to an armed conflict to choose the methods or means of warfare is not unlimited, the rule of distinction, the prohibition against indiscriminate attacks, the rules on proportionality and precautions in attack, the prohibition on the use of weapons of a nature to cause superfluous injury or unnecessary suffering and the rules for the protection of the natural environment. The greatest possible breach of those principles derives from the existence and potential use or threat of use of nuclear weapons, with their indiscriminate short-term and long-term effects.

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) cannot be interpreted as allowing the indefinite possession of nuclear weapons, and the exceptional status granted until now to nuclear weapons cannot be justified. Nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament are mutually reinforcing and equally essential for ensuring international peace and security. In that regard, the State of Palestine is proud to have participated in and actively contributed to the elaboration of the landmark and historic Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which was adopted on 7 July 2017. We are proud to have signed the treaty on day one and to have been among the first to ratify it. We are also proud to have joined the relevant instruments prohibiting other weapons of mass destruction.

The pursuit of the total elimination of nuclear weapons requires decisive steps, including the establishment and consolidation of nuclear-weapon-free zones, which are indispensable to establishing a nuclear-weapon-free world. The establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and all other WMDs in the region of the Middle East is more urgent than ever, constitutes an important contribution to nuclear disarmament and deserves the support of all. Twenty-three years after the adoption of a resolution on the Middle East and eight years after the adoption of the 2010 Action Plan on the Middle East, determined action is long overdue and must take place ahead of the 2020 NPT Review Conference. In that regard, Member States will have an opportunity to act in accordance with their constantly reaffirmed positions in favour of a zone free of nuclear weapons and all other WMDs in the Middle East during the current session. The draft decision put forward by the Arab Group in that regard is consistent with the international consensus on the matter and with the existing legal obligations and the long-standing commitments of the States in the region and beyond.

The State of Palestine is deeply concerned by the ever-increasing production and international trade in weapons, including conventional weapons, many of which are used indiscriminately and disproportionately. It is estimated that military expenditures worldwide represent more than \$1.7 trillion annually, 20 per cent of which could end world poverty. The State of Palestine is the first State in the Middle East to have become party to the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), having acceded on 29 December 2017. We firmly believe that stricter conventional arms control measures will reduce human suffering and play a key role in the achievement of peace and security, the full enjoyment of human rights and integral human development.

Articles 6 and 7 of the ATT identify the responsibilities of States for ensuring that the transfer of arms will not be used in the commission of atrocity crimes, including crimes against humanity and war crimes, or in the commission of serious violations of international humanitarian law and human rights law. There can be no doubt that Israel is responsible for such violations and crimes, including the deliberate targeting of civilians, in particular the targeting of peaceful protesters, indiscriminate attacks, the use of weapons of a nature to cause superfluous injury or unnecessary suffering, the forced displacement of civilian populations and the transfer by the occupying

Power of its own population to the occupied territory. Furthermore, Israel's arms industry prides itself in its field-testing of weapons on civilians in Gaza, which is perceived by the Israeli military sector as a kind of "great laboratory". All States must ensure that they disassociate themselves from Israel's violations, including by halting the delivery of arms and military equipment to Israel.

In conclusion, Palestine also underlines our shared and collective responsibility to preserve and protect the spaces that belong to all humankind, including outer space. Ensuring that outer space is a safe and secure space that is dedicated to research and development and our collective human advancement is essential for promoting international cooperation and safeguarding international peace and security.

We reiterate our full support for the work of the First Committee and urge all States to take principled and determined action to fulfil its ultimate purpose of achieving a more peaceful and stable world.

**The Acting Chair:** I now give the floor to the Head of the Arms Unit of the International Committee of the Red Cross.

**Ms. Lawand** (International Committee of the Red Cross): I will read an abridged version of our statement, the full version of which will be made available at the back of the room and on PaperSmart. It covers a range of issues to be discussed at the current session of the First Committee, namely, nuclear weapons, chemical weapons, the weaponization of cyberspace and outer space, autonomous weapon systems, explosive weapons in populated areas, responsible arms transfers and other conventional-weapon issues.

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) welcomed the Secretary-General's *Securing Our Common Future — An Agenda for Disarmament*. Like the Secretary-General, the ICRC firmly believes that disarmament and arms limitation are not just tools to maintain international peace and security and to prevent or end armed conflict. They are also critical means to mitigate the impact of armed conflict when it occurs. That is also the aim of international humanitarian law, also known as the law of armed conflict. Respecting and ensuring respect for international humanitarian law in armed conflict, including its rules prohibiting or limiting the use of certain weapons, is a fundamental responsibility of States and cuts across all of the

important issues that will be discussed here in the First Committee.

This year marks the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of one of the earliest international humanitarian law treaties to prohibit a weapon, namely, the Saint Petersburg Declaration of 1868. In commemoration, the ICRC and the Interparliamentary Assembly of the Commonwealth of Independent States are jointly organizing a high-level conference in St. Petersburg at the end of November. The 1868 Saint Petersburg Declaration is famous not just for prohibiting a new weapon — exploding bullets — that had not yet been used on the battlefield, but also for reaffirming the humanitarian principles applicable to warfare and weapons of war, and the limits at which the necessities of war ought to yield to the requirements of humanity. But the Declaration is equally remarkable for how it came about. It was adopted by military powers convened by Russia for the purpose of prohibiting a new weapon that it had itself developed but which, it had concluded, was morally unacceptable. All States today should take inspiration from that example by exercising responsible leadership, taking bold initiatives, reaching out to adversaries and working constructively and collaboratively to achieve progress on fulfilling long-standing disarmament commitments, progress that is essential to safeguarding peace and security and our common humanity. Such responsible action is needed more than ever if we are to make concrete progress towards the universal goal of a world free of nuclear weapons.

The ICRC and the broader International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement have long called for the prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons. Our call is rooted in our first-hand observation of the horrific consequences of the atomic bombings in 1945, our knowledge that we would be unable to provide an adequate humanitarian response if nuclear weapons were ever to be used again and their general incompatibility with international humanitarian law. Today, the evidence is clear that even a limited use of nuclear weapons would have devastating, long-lasting and irreparable humanitarian consequences. The only realistic means of safeguarding against nuclear catastrophe is nuclear disarmament. It is a humanitarian imperative.

The Movement therefore calls on all States to sign and ratify the 2017 Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) as a concrete and essential step towards

implementing long-standing nuclear disarmament obligations, notably those under article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), which the TPNW complements. By joining the TPNW, States send a clear signal that any use, threat of use or possession of nuclear weapons is unacceptable in humanitarian, moral and — now — legal terms. That supports and reinforces the NPT's non-proliferation and disarmament objectives.

The Movement calls on those States unable to join the TPNW at this time, in particular those that possess nuclear weapons and their allies, to take interim steps to prevent the use of nuclear weapons in accordance with existing commitments. On 23 April, the President of the ICRC, Peter Maurer, appealed to States possessing nuclear weapons to urgently reduce nuclear risks through a range of concrete actions. Those actions include unequivocal commitments never to use nuclear weapons first, removing nuclear weapons from hair-trigger alert status, re-establishing joint early-warning centres to clarify in real-time unexpected and potentially destabilizing events, and taking progressive steps to reduce the role of nuclear weapons in security policies. The ICRC appeals to the nuclear-weapon States to take their responsibilities to protect their populations and humankind as a whole by urgently implementing those measures, many of which derive from the 2010 NPT action plan. We urge them to report to the 2020 NPT Review Conference on progress they have made on risk-reduction measures and any concrete steps they have taken towards nuclear disarmament.

The ICRC remains deeply concerned about the repeated use of chemical weapons, notably in Syria. Last year, ICRC field teams treated victims of chemical weapons in Iraq. The ICRC firmly condemns any use of chemical weapons as an unacceptable disregard for humanity and the rule of law. The ICRC again appeals to all parties to armed conflicts and to States parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention to uphold that prohibition.

Over the past year, concerns have remained high over criminal, hostile and other malicious use of cyberspace. In consultation with experts and by drawing on specific events and trend analysis, the ICRC is currently working to develop a more in-depth assessment of the potential human costs of cyberoperations, especially during armed conflicts, with a view to further contributing to debates on legal and policy responses.

International law, including but not limited to international humanitarian law, already protects civilians against cyberoperations. States must ensure that any capability they develop, or operation they carry out, remains within the limits imposed by law. Still, common understandings are needed on the scope of existing protections. We are encouraged by proposals to reconvene the Group of Governmental Experts on Developments in the Field of Information and Telecommunications in the Context of International Security. The views of the legal, policy and scientific communities — and of academia, industry and other relevant stakeholders — can help inform discussions at the international level. The ICRC remains ready to lend its expertise in those matters. The ICRC wishes to again emphasize that discussions on the limits imposed by international humanitarian law on resort to cyberoperations during armed conflicts should not be interpreted as encouraging the weaponization of cyberspace or as legitimizing cyberwarfare, which — like any other use of force — remains constrained by the Charter of the United Nations.

**The Acting Chair:** We have heard the last speaker on the list for the general debate.

The Committee will now hear statements by representatives of non-governmental organizations. I request that speakers make their statements brief, no longer than four minutes. In keeping with the Committee's established practice, I shall now suspend the meeting to enable us to continue in an informal setting.

*The meeting was suspended at 12.55 p.m. and resumed at 1 p.m.*

#### **Programme of work**

**The Acting Chair:** As agreed earlier today, this afternoon at 3 p.m., the Committee will first engage in a high-level exchange with the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs and other high-level officials on the current state of affairs in the field of disarmament and arms control. Thereafter, the Committee will resume its general debate to hear from the remaining civil society representatives. The Committee will then begin its thematic discussion under the cluster "Nuclear weapons". All rights of reply will be exercised at the end of the afternoon plenary meeting.

*The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.*