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Official Records

President: Ms. Espinosa Garcés. (Ecuador)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

High-level meeting to commemorate and promote the International Day against Nuclear Tests

Agenda item 101 (*continued*)

General and complete disarmament

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with resolution 72/51, of 24 December 2017, and under agenda item 101, “General and complete disarmament”, the General Assembly will now begin its high-level meeting to commemorate and promote the International Day against Nuclear Tests.

Statement by the President

The President: Let me begin by welcoming Her Excellency Ms. Annika Thunborg, former Spokesperson and Chief of Public Information at the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization and Ambassador of Sweden to Mexico, and Mr. Lassina Zerbo, Executive Secretary of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization, who will be making statements shortly.

Every year, the International Day against Nuclear Tests provides an important opportunity to enhance public awareness and education about the devastating effects of nuclear-weapon tests. Every year on this occasion, we call for the cessation of such tests, which is a crucial milestone for achieving a world free of nuclear weapons.

This year marks the tenth observance of the Day. It provides an opportunity to reflect on our shared vision of nuclear disarmament as set out in the very first resolution of the General Assembly (resolution 1 (I)), to assess where we are headed if we continue on our current trajectory and to discuss together how we can close the gap between the two.

Approximately 2,000 nuclear tests have been conducted since 1945, with devastating consequences for people and for our planet. The effects — on lives and livelihoods, on human health, on soil and groundwater, on animals, birds and marine life, and on the atmosphere — reverberate across generations, with profound impacts on all aspects of sustainable development.

Today we honour the memory of all victims of nuclear tests and pay our respects to those whose lives have been adversely affected. We owe it to them, and to generations yet unborn, not to repeat the horror of nuclear tests and nuclear-weapon explosions.

I pay tribute to the Government of Kazakhstan for its leadership on this issue and express my solidarity with those who continue to be affected by the hundreds of tests carried out at Semipalatinsk, the first of which was conducted 70 years ago. In 1991, Kazakhstan took the bold and necessary step of closing down that test site and has been a vocal proponent of nuclear disarmament ever since, supporting the establishment of the Central Asian Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone, as well as the creation of this very International Day.

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I should like to take a moment to express once again my sincere condolences to the family, friends and colleagues of Yukiya Amano, the late Director-General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), who passed away in July. He will be remembered for his principled leadership and sound judgment, for his handling of the international response to the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear accident and for increasing international confidence in IAEA nuclear safeguards. I am sure his legacy will endure.

We are living through dangerous period marked by tensions between nuclear-armed States. These differences can be resolved only through dialogue. We cannot even contemplate the destructive power of the world's existing nuclear arsenal — although contemplate it we must, as the humanitarian impact initiative has shown. Nuclear weapons and tests are totally at odds with our commitment to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Not only do they affect people; they affect our planet, prosperity and ability to forge the partnerships we need and our prospects for peace.

The adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty by the General Assembly in 1996 was an important moment in our quest for disarmament. I commend the 168 Member States that have already ratified the treaty and urge the remaining eight CTBT annex 2 States to join them so that this crucial Treaty can enter into force. I also encourage States to follow the lead of Kazakhstan and others in ratifying the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

In October 2012, nuclear scientists and engineers from Kazakhstan, the Russian Federation and the United States celebrated the completion of a joint 17-year project to secure fissile material left behind in mountain tunnels following the abandonment of the Semipalatinsk site. That example of collaboration should inspire us, even in these difficult times, to work together in pursuit of a world free of nuclear weapons. That is the best way to honour the victims of nuclear bombs and tests and to ensure that no more join their ranks in future.

(spoke in Spanish)

I now have the honour to invite the Secretary-General of the United Nations, His Excellency Mr. António Guterres, to make a statement.

The Secretary-General: I thank all those present for coming together to commemorate the International Day against Nuclear Tests. As the President of the General Assembly mentioned, the International Day was officially set for 29 August to mark the closing, in 1991, of the nuclear test site at Semipalatinsk, Kazakhstan, the largest in the former Soviet Union. More than 450 tests took place there, with impacts still being felt decades later. The purpose of the Day is twofold: first, to pay tribute to the victims of nuclear tests, and, secondly, to raise awareness of the continuous threat that such tests pose to the environment and international security.

All told, over 2,000 nuclear tests were carried out over the past seven decades, unleashing a terrible toll. Nuclear tests devastated pristine environments and local populations around the world. Peoples from regions as diverse as the South Pacific, North America and North Africa have equally suffered from poisoned groundwater, radioactive fallout and other side effects on health and living conditions.

This Day is a reminder of our moral obligation to ensure the legally binding prohibition of nuclear weapons. At the same time, we also acknowledge the significant progress in banning nuclear tests. The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) is one of the most widely supported multilateral treaties, with 184 State signatories and 168 ratifications. Its verification mechanism, the International Monitoring System, has helped facilitate international peace and security. Yet, despite that progress, the Treaty has not yet entered into force. Eight of the 44 States whose ratification is necessary for the Treaty to enter into force have not yet ratified it. I want to take this opportunity to call once again on all States to sign and ratify the CTBT without further delay and for those remaining eight States to do so with a sense of urgency.

In the twenty-first century, nuclear testing is simply not acceptable. It is not acceptable to destroy and contaminate the environment. It is not acceptable for local populations to suffer from radioactive fallout and other nuclear by-products. And it is not acceptable to prevent the entry into force of the CTBT and thereby withhold its valuable restraint on the qualitative and quantitative proliferation of nuclear weapons and this practical step towards their total elimination. Let us, together, make the most of this occasion to renew our commitment to outlawing all nuclear tests for all time, in all places. I thank members and count on their continued support towards achieving this vital goal.

The President: I thank the Secretary-General for his statement.

(spoke in Spanish)

Before continuing, I wish to consult members about inviting the following speakers to give statements on this occasion: Mr. Lassina Zerbo, Executive Secretary of the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization; and Her Excellency Annika Thunborg, Ambassador of Sweden to Mexico and former Spokesperson and Chief of Public Information of the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. If there are no objections, may I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly, without setting a precedent, to invite these speakers to make statements at this commemorative meeting?

It was so decided.

The President *(spoke in Spanish)*: I now give the floor to Mr. Zerbo.

Mr. Zerbo (Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization): I wish to convey my deepest appreciation to Ms. Maria Fernanda Espinosa Garcés for the invitation to deliver a keynote statement during today's high-level meeting of the General Assembly to commemorate and promote 29 August as the International Day against Nuclear Tests. As Executive Secretary of the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO), annual events commemorating the International Day against Nuclear Tests have always been near and dear to my heart. They serve as an important and stark reminder to the world of the disastrous consequences of nuclear testing on human health and the environment. They help to highlight the role that Kazakhstan has played in ensuring that the issue of nuclear testing remains at the forefront of the global agenda, and they underscore the significant progress that has been achieved in putting an end to nuclear testing for all time.

But most importantly, the International Day against Nuclear Tests provides an opportunity to send a clear and unmistakable message to the international community that our work is not yet done. The business of ending nuclear tests for all time remains unfinished. For this reason, it is my hope that today's commemoration will help to inspire countries to take concrete measures that will allow us to finally reach our objective of a world

free from the dangers of nuclear testing. And the only path that will lead us to this noble goal is through the verifiability of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and its universalization.

As with each past commemoration, it is my distinct pleasure to take part in this year's high-level meeting of the General Assembly to commemorate and promote the International Day against Nuclear Tests. However, this year I am doubly honoured and yet saddened at the same time. Recently, the international community lost a true friend and ally with the passing of Yukiya Amano, the late Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency. Yukiya Amano was a champion of the peaceful use of nuclear energy and was dedicated to implementing effective controls to ensure that nuclear materials and technology are not diverted for non-peaceful purposes. On 29 August this year, I was honoured and humbled to be jointly awarded — together with the late Yukiya Amano — the Nazarbayev Prize for a Nuclear-Weapons-Free World and Global Security by the President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev.

President Nazarbayev made the historic decision to renounce the possession of nuclear arms, to send the nuclear warheads in Kazakhstan to Russia and to permanently close the Semipalatinsk nuclear test site. These decisions may seem obvious now, but they took great courage and leadership. I thank President Nazarbayev and the people of Kazakhstan for their unwavering support for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament and for the leadership they showed in getting the CTBT opened for signature.

I say "people" because, in the end, it is people who will make tough decisions. It is people who will provide leadership. President Nazarbayev has demonstrated that peace, security and prosperity do not depend on the possession of nuclear weapons. In fact, he understood that there was much more to gain from denuclearizing than from going forward as a nuclear possessor State. He also understood, thanks to dedicated scientists and civil servants, as well as ordinary folk who had been affected by nuclear tests, that there was no future in retaining nuclear-test capability at the Semipalatinsk test site. The people of Kazakhstan had already paid too high a price for the nearly 500 nuclear tests that were conducted at that site. The closing of Semipalatinsk would be just the first of many steps taken by Kazakhstan to advance the vision of a nuclear-weapon-free world. It was decision-making at the highest level that led to the final closure of the test site, but it was also thanks to the

unyielding determination of the people of Kazakhstan to decide their own future — a future in which the testing or possession of nuclear weapons had no place.

At the head of the public movement to close the test site was Mr. Olzhas Suleimenov, a poet, writer, politician, diplomat and anti-nuclear activist. Educated as a geologist, Mr. Suleimenov initiated and led the popular Nevada-Semipalatinsk movement in 1989, which sought to close the Semipalatinsk nuclear test site and other nuclear test sites around the world. There was also Mr. Tolegen Mukhamedzhanov, an active participant in the Nevada-Semipalatinsk movement and a friend and colleague of Mr. Suleimenov. Mr. Mukhamedzhanov was a composer of symphonies, operas, chamber music and popular instrumental music, as well as music for films and theatre productions. He composed the famous song “Zaman-ai,” which became the hymn of public protest against nuclear testing.

While charismatic and unifying figures were deeply important in this movement, let us not forget about the scientists who were determined to collect and analyse the data on the impact of nuclear testing on the local population. Professor Bakhiya Atchabarov, of the Institute of Regional Pathology of the Kazakh Academy of Sciences, headed clinical expeditions from 1957 to 1960. The expedition teams examined 3,500 local residents and an additional 2,000 non-locals as a control group, and were able to collect thousands of what have been called “heart-breaking” data points that filled 12 classified volumes.

And, of course, there is my dear friend Karipbek Kuyukov who, after being born without arms as a result of nuclear radiation exposure, has devoted his life to ensuring that no one else suffers from the destructive effects of nuclear tests. Karipbek is a true inspiration. He shares his story through his own art, which depicts the life, culture and struggles that he has known as a victim of nuclear testing. As an honorary Ambassador of the ATOM Project, Karipbek uses his voice and artistic vision to educate others about the need for a total and complete end to nuclear testing as a way to achieve a world free from nuclear weapons.

These are but a few examples of the people who have played important roles in the closing of the Semipalatinsk test site. We are here today to acknowledge their bravery and determination and to celebrate their stories as we push forward in our quest

for a world free from the dangers of nuclear testing through the entry into force of the CTBT.

I was recently in Funafuti, Tuvalu, to participate in the fiftieth Pacific Islands Forum. This year’s Forum took place in the same place where, 35 years ago, the fifteenth South Pacific Forum decided that a nuclear-weapon free zone should be established in the South Pacific. The resulting treaty — the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty, or the Treaty of Rarotonga — embodied the determination of a local population, represented by sovereign States, to live in peace and independence and to protect their people and environment. The Treaty of Rarotonga prohibits the possession, use, testing or stationing of nuclear weapons by any country.

As with the movement to close the Semipalatinsk test site, that determination was driven by the legacy of nuclear testing in the region. The devastating impact of those tests on the people and environment in the South Pacific continues to be an issue of concern today. During the discussions at this year’s Forum, I was struck by the immensity of the challenges facing the region. Whether it was how to increase capacities with limited resources, how to improve educational opportunities and spur economic growth, or how to mitigate the consequences of a changing climate, one thing was clear to me — the solution to every challenge would require active cooperation and collaboration, both within the region and with the international community more broadly.

The same message rings true with the CTBT. Without the international scientific cooperation that laid the groundwork for its verification regime, we would not be able to say with confidence today that the system has reached a state of readiness to provide adequate verification of the Treaty.

And without the multilateral diplomacy that took place throughout the past five decades, we would not have the CTBT at all. Likewise, bringing the CTBT into force and fulfilling the overarching objective of the International Day against Nuclear Tests will require concerted and sustained multilateral efforts at every step. Scientists, diplomats, politicians, academics, the media and all of civil society can play a role. The next generation, with its intuition and spirit of innovation, will continue to contribute to the cause. The CTBTO Youth Group, with its more than 700-strong membership, has

raised its voice in support of a peaceful and prosperous future, free from the dangers of nuclear testing.

But in the end, it will be the States themselves that will make the sovereign decision on whether to join the overwhelming international consensus against nuclear testing. By doing so, we will have put in place, perhaps, the most effective and symbolic measure that will lead us to a world free from nuclear weapons.

Let us commemorate the decision of President Nazarbayev to end nuclear testing forever on the Kazak steppe. Let us honour the victims and celebrate the citizen heroes who fought for an end to nuclear testing in their backyard. Let us recognize the will of the Pacific island States to live without the fear of nuclear weapons and nuclear-weapon testing. Let us respect the desire of the States members of all the nuclear-weapon free zones to renounce nuclear weapons and nuclear testing in their regions, and let us do this by embracing multilateral solutions as the most effective and, ultimately, necessary way to address the threat of nuclear proliferation.

The risk of nuclear proliferation and the threat of nuclear terrorism continue to pose great challenges for the international community. In order to guarantee the continued viability of nuclear power for peace and development, we must reinforce and build upon the legal framework that has been painstakingly established to keep nuclear risks low, while ensuring that countries can continue to benefit from the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

The CTBT is a crucial and long-overdue step that will help to ensure the continued vitality of the international nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament regime. If we work together, I am confident that we can achieve that noble aim. Let us mark this International Day against Nuclear Tests by strengthening our commitment to putting an end to nuclear tests once and for all.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mr. Zerbo for his comprehensive briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Thunborg.

Ms. Thunborg (Sweden): It is a great honour for me to be here today commemorating, together with everyone present, the International Day Against Nuclear Tests, and thus the prohibition enshrined in the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), one of the strongest and most comprehensive treaties negotiated and implemented in the area of

non-proliferation and disarmament and thus in the field of security.

(*spoke in Spanish*)

It is a great honour and pleasure to be here together with President Espinosa Garcés, a representative of her region, Latin America, which was the first region to become a nuclear-weapon-free zone through the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Latin America and Europe have been close allies in the promotion of international law, multilateral affairs and disarmament and non-proliferation projects since the creation of the United Nations. As Sweden's Ambassador to Mexico, I am pleased to note the close collaboration between Sweden and Mexico, which was recognized in 1982 when Alfonso García Robles and Alva Myrdal were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for their magnificent work in United Nations disarmament negotiations. Most recently, from 2011 to 2013, our Foreign Ministers presided together over the article XIV process by promoting the entry into force of the CTBT.

(*spoke in English*)

It is a great honour to be here with Secretary-General António Guterres, the foremost representative of the Organization that has helped make the world safer, more equal and a better place to live since it was created more than 70 years ago in the wake of the devastating World Wars. Like others in my generation, I grew up with the notion that it is the rule of law — international, regional and national — and the institutions that are there to implement it, that is the foundation of our modern civilization. That it is because of the United Nations family and regional organizations, such as the European Union, and because of a national perspective that the land shall be built upon the law, which is a strong concept in the Swedish and Nordic tradition, that notions of peace and security have largely replaced notions of war and conflict. And, in order to be able to do better, we need more, not less, rule of law; we need more, not less, international and regional cooperation and agreements; we need more, not less, dialogue and confidence-building measures.

It is therefore a great honour to be here with Mr. Lassina Zerbo, the foremost representative of the Treaty and its organization that represent exactly this — the rule of law and a safer and more secure world. The CTBT prohibits comprehensively and

non-discriminatorily one of the most devastating inventions of humankind — the nuclear explosion. The world saw more than 2,000 nuclear explosions, conducted for military and so-called peaceful purposes, with devastating effects on humans, animals and the environment, before the CTBT was achieved through dialogue and negotiations.

The CTBT makes it very difficult to develop new and more advanced nuclear weapons and is a model treaty not least because of its well-thought-out verification regime — a monitoring system complemented by on-site inspections designed to detect any militarily significant nuclear explosion no matter where it occurs in the world, accompanied by transparency and confidence-building measures and national technical means to resolve any dispute or compliance concern.

Unfortunately, the door to further nuclear testing remains ajar. Major States have yet to ratify the Treaty, not only putting the world at risk but also denying themselves and others of the full security benefits of the Treaty, including short-notice on-site inspections to better deter and detect clandestine nuclear testing and resolve whether it really has occurred.

In commemoration of the International Day Against Nuclear Tests, the Swedish Foreign Minister, Ms. Margot Wallström, honours the victims of nuclear testing and urges the entry into force of the Treaty. It is time to close and firmly lock the door on nuclear testing.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Uganda, who will speak on behalf of the Group of African States.

Mr. Odida (Uganda): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Group of African States today on the International Day Against Nuclear Tests.

The African Group expresses appreciation to you, Madam President, for convening this commemorative meeting and for your support for nuclear disarmament. The Group expresses its appreciation for the valuable message delivered by the Secretary-General and the statement made by the Executive Secretary of the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization.

The fact that we are convening here today is a demonstration of our willingness and determination to see an end to nuclear tests as a necessary measure to achieve the total elimination of nuclear weapons. To that end, the African Group supports the goals

of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), the intention of which is the enforcement of a comprehensive ban on nuclear tests, with all their attendant ramifications, and to cease entirely the vertical and horizontal proliferation of nuclear weapons.

Indeed, nuclear-test explosions have devastating effects on the terrestrial environment. We all have a duty to protect the environment by respecting the moratorium against nuclear testing as we work assiduously to achieve the universality of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the entry into force of the CTBT.

The total elimination of nuclear weapons remains the only absolute guarantee against their use or threat of use. In that context, the Group reiterates the urgent need for our planet, including outer space, to be free of nuclear weapons, as their presence constitutes an existential threat to global peace and security, as well as to the future survival of humankind. It is in view of this that the Group notes the 2017 award of the Nobel Peace Prize to the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons.

The Group supports the principle of complete nuclear disarmament as the utmost prerequisite for maintaining international peace and security. It is in this spirit that we recall the historical adoption of the landmark Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) on 7 July 2017. The Group therefore wishes to urge all States to support the TPNW by signing and ratifying it as soon as possible. It is hoped that all members of the international community, including nuclear-weapon States and those under the so-called nuclear umbrella, will seize the opportunity to pursue the goal of a nuclear-free world.

The African Group looks forward to the holding of the sixth General Assembly high-level plenary meeting in commemoration of the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons, on 26 September, and underscores its importance as an integral part of the multilateral disarmament effort.

The Group restates its deep concern about the slow pace of progress by nuclear-weapon States to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals, in accordance with their legal obligations and undertakings under article VI of the Non-Proliferation Treaty. The Group therefore insists on the implementation of all agreed measures and undertakings by the nuclear-weapon States in the context of the NPT, including

the commitments regarding achieving the universality of the NPT and the establishment of a zone free of all weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East.

The Group underscores the contribution of nuclear-weapon-free zones across the world to the overall aim of achieving nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation objectives, thereby enhancing global and regional peace and security. In that context, the African Group reiterates its commitment to the Treaty of Pelindaba, which reaffirms the status of Africa as a nuclear-weapon-free zone and as a shield for the African territory, including by preventing the stationing of nuclear explosive devices on the continent and prohibiting the testing of those weapons in the entire space that constitutes the African continent.

In the same vein, the African Group welcomes the convening of the United Nations conference on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, pursuant to decision 73/546, and calls on all invited States to actively participate in the conference in good faith in order to negotiate a legally binding treaty that satisfies the implementation of the resolution on the Middle East, adopted at the NPT Review Conference.

The Group wishes to further stress that the 1995 resolution remains an integral and essential part of the package and the basis upon which the NPT was indefinitely extended. The Group underlines the continued validity of the resolution until its objectives are achieved. The Group reiterates its regret that the ninth NPT Review Conference was unable to agree on a final outcome document, despite the concerted efforts of non-nuclear-weapon States, particularly in Africa. As we look forward to the tenth NPT Review Conference, to be held in New York in 2020, the Group calls on all States to work towards preserving the credibility and sustainability of the Treaty and achieving its objectives.

The African Group underscores the inalienable right of States to the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and highlights the central role of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in providing technical assistance and cooperation and maximizing the use of science and technology for socioeconomic development, as well as in monitoring States' commitments to the implementation of the IAEA safeguards agreement.

The Group stresses the importance of nuclear knowledge-sharing and the transfer of nuclear technology to developing countries, including African

countries, and highlights the potential contribution of nuclear energy to promoting sustainable development and prosperity across the world. The Group stresses that the IAEA Technical Cooperation Programme should continue to be formulated and implemented in accordance with its statute.

The Group wishes to emphasize humanitarian considerations in the context of all deliberations on nuclear weapons and calls upon all States, particularly nuclear-weapon States, to take into consideration the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of the use of these weapons on human health, the environment and vital economic resources, among others, and to take the measures necessary aimed at the dismantling and renunciation of these weapons.

The Group wishes to reiterate the importance of achieving universal adherence to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, particularly bearing in mind the special responsibilities of nuclear-weapon States. The Group believes that the CTBT offers hope of halting the further development and proliferation of nuclear weapons, thereby contributing to the goal of nuclear disarmament. It urges nuclear-weapon States and those yet to accede to the NPT, which are listed in annex 2 of the Treaty, and have not yet signed or ratified the CTBT, to do so without further delay.

In conclusion, the African Group once again calls on all States to work persistently to facilitate the expeditious entry into force of the CTBT in order to fulfil the goal and objective of a nuclear-weapon-free world, taking into account the special responsibility of the nuclear-weapon States in this regard.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Slovenia, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Eastern European States.

Ms. Bavdaž Kuret (Slovenia): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Group of Eastern European States.

Almost 10 years have passed since the unanimous adoption of resolution 64/35, which declared the International Day against Nuclear Tests. Under the leadership of Kazakhstan, we commemorate this historic day each year and pay tribute to the victims of nuclear tests and their side effects. We reaffirm our commitment to ending nuclear testing, which brings nothing but destruction and threat to all forms of life.

It is vital for the international community to ensure the prompt entry into force and implementation of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), which is a keystone document for effective international nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation efforts. We call upon all States that have yet do so, and in particular those whose ratification is needed for the Treaty's entry into force, to sign and ratify the CTBT. The Treaty has created powerful norms against nuclear weapons testing, and we urge all States to respect it and refrain from conducting any action contrary to its object and purpose.

No one doubts that nuclear weapons tests are a threat to international peace and security and that they undermine the existing non-proliferation architecture that has been built over decades. Nevertheless, and despite all the international community's efforts, the threat of testing and misuse of nuclear weapons is still very much alive, as illustrated by the dangerous developments in recent years on the Korean peninsula. We are encouraged by recent positive developments on the peninsula, inter alia, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea unilateral moratorium on nuclear tests, and further call on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to sign and ratify the CTBT without delay and to comply with its provisions.

In a world of rising tensions, divisions and ongoing competition in the armaments field, it is essential to maintain the integrity of non-proliferation norms and to advance nuclear disarmament. In this regard, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is a historic success and its full implementation is needed more than ever, not to mention in the context of the celebration of the NPT's fiftieth anniversary next year. A peaceful world is our goal, and if we want to achieve it, a complete ban of nuclear weapons testing is one of the most important steps in doing so.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I have received requests for the floor from a number of other delegations for this commemorative meeting.

I give the floor to the representative of Thailand, who will speak on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

Mr. Srivihok (Thailand): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the States members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), namely, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia,

Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Viet Nam.

On today's occasion, ASEAN reaffirms its collective position against nuclear tests and continues to stress the importance of achieving universal adherence to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). Thailand ratified the CTBT on 25 September 2018, making all ASEAN member States ratifying parties to the CTBT. The fact that all ASEAN member States have ratified the CTBT solidifies and bolsters our strong commitment to the international norm against nuclear testing, as well as our steadfast support of the CTBT.

Mr. Ten-Pow (Guyana), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Bearing in mind the significance of the CTBT, we join others in urging the remaining annex 2 States to sign and ratify the Treaty as soon as possible so as to achieve its entry into force.

ASEAN deplores the conduct of nuclear tests, which are contrary to Council resolutions and go against international efforts and norms with regard to nuclear testing, non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament. We recognize the humanitarian consequences of the use of nuclear weapons, and reiterate our support for efforts to eliminate them. We affirm the importance of regional nuclear-weapon free zones to the existing global non-proliferation regime. We continue to support ongoing efforts to establish such zones, especially in the Middle East. We reiterate our commitment to preserve our region as a zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction, as enshrined in the ASEAN Charter and the Treaty on the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone, also known as the Bangkok Treaty.

Along with the Bangkok Treaty and other nuclear-weapon free zone treaties, the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons provides that each State party undertake to never, under any circumstance, develop, test, produce, manufacture, otherwise acquire, possess or stockpile nuclear weapons or other nuclear-explosive devices. In that connection, ASEAN welcomes the efforts of Secretary-General António Guterres for his comprehensive agenda for disarmament, launched in May 2018. The agenda reflects the earnest attempt of the Secretary-General to advance disarmament objectives in concrete ways and in a holistic and integrated manner. ASEAN recognizes the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) as the

cornerstone of the global non-proliferation regime and calls on all States parties to the NPT to renew their commitment to the urgent and full implementation of existing obligations, particularly those under article VI of the NPT.

ASEAN welcomes the three inter-Korean summits and the first summit between the United States and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, hosted in Singapore last year. On 5 March, ASEAN Foreign Ministers issued a statement acknowledging the efforts made during the second summit between the United States and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, held on 27 and 28 February in Hanoi, to bring progress to the Korean peninsula denuclearization process. It also encouraged the United States and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to continue their diplomatic endeavours in order to lay the groundwork for establishing a lasting and stable peace regime and bringing about the complete denuclearization of the Korean peninsula. ASEAN stands ready to continue to play a constructive role in contributing to peace and stability on the Korean peninsula. We call on all parties concerned to reinforce their efforts to reduce tensions and work towards a peaceful solution to the situation on the Korean peninsula.

ASEAN reiterates its strong position against all nuclear tests and calls on all Member States, particularly the nuclear-weapon States, to demonstrate good faith, promote mutual understanding, build trust and cooperation and ensure responsible, collective action in striving for a world without nuclear weapons.

The Acting President: I now call on the representative of Bahrain, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Arab States.

Mr. Alrowaieci (Bahrain) (*spoke in Arabic*): It is my honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Group of Arab States in commemoration of the International Day against Nuclear Tests. This is an important event that serves to confirm the desire and commitment of the international community to put an end to nuclear tests, which have terrorized humankind and caused lasting environmental damage.

The Arab Group appreciates the important elements in the statement of the President of the General Assembly. We also appreciate the statements of the Secretary-General and the Executive Secretary of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization. All those statements today reaffirm the urgent need to

eliminate all threats posed by nuclear weapons, which are without a doubt the category of weapon that is most contrary to humanitarian principles and international humanitarian law.

In that regard, the Arab Group expresses its concern pertaining to the threat confronting humankind as a result of the continued existence of nuclear weapons. The Group stresses that the total, verifiable and irrevocable elimination of such weapons is the only guarantee against their use or threat of use, by State and non-State parties alike. Achieving that agreed-upon objective depends on the implementation by the nuclear-weapon States of their obligations under article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). It also depends on achieving the universality of the Treaty, which is considered a cornerstone of the international security system for disarmament and non-proliferation.

The Arab Group believes that the continued existence of nuclear weapons and the failure to implement article VI of the NPT, as well as other relevant binding commitments that have been adopted at various NPT Review Conferences to achieve its universality through the adherence of States that have not yet acceded to it, represent a serious threat to international peace and security.

The Arab Group also categorically rejects the pretexts that the possession of nuclear weapons is necessary to achieve international stability, or that the prevailing international circumstances are not conducive to making progress on implementing denuclearization commitments. In fact, if we look closely at the challenges currently posed by nuclear proliferation, we find that those challenges could have been better addressed, or they would not have existed at all in a world free of nuclear weapons.

We call on the nuclear-weapon States to fulfil their responsibilities in order to implement their agreed objectives and commitments and eliminate their nuclear arsenals in accordance with a specific timetable. That is the least that could be done by those States that have conducted nuclear tests in order to compensate the international community for the ongoing serious damage caused by their thousands of nuclear tests.

Although the Middle East is a region of tension and challenges, the Arab States have demonstrated their good intentions by acceding to the NPT and implementing their commitments in that regard. They

also actively participated in the negotiations on the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and continue to support the activities of its Preparatory Commission in order to fulfil its mandated objectives. However, the Middle East remains one of the main challenges facing the NPT regime owing to the fact that the NPT is not yet universal and that Israel continues to challenge the will of the international community, refusing to implement the relevant United Nations resolutions and abide by the provisions of the Treaty.

Certain international Powers continue to turn a blind eye to this dysfunctional situation while continuing to provide a political umbrella for Israel's positions. This disparity of the security system has led to an arms race and conflicts in the region, where Arab countries feel unprecedented frustration as a result of repeated failures in implementing the objective of ridding the region of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction and not implementing the agreed-upon commitments in that regard.

The Arab Group is looking for the revival of multilateral efforts with a view to address this imbalance in our region by implementing the agreed-upon pledges, foremost of which is the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone including other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East, in keeping with the relevant resolution adopted at the 1995 Review and Extension Conference and with what the Review Conference decided in 2000 and 2010 on the implementation of the of the 1995 resolution as well as Security Council resolutions 487 (1981) and 678 (1991), in addition to scores of relevant resolutions adopted by the General Assembly and General Conference of the International Atomic Energy Agency in that regard.

The Arab Group emphasizes the importance of the conference to be held by the United Nations in November, under the presidency of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, with regard to establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. We urge all actors participating in the conference to do so in a spirit of goodwill in order to negotiate a binding treaty in that regard so as to contribute to enhancing peace and security at the regional and international levels.

There have been many recent developments, notably the adoption of the Humanitarian Pledge that was stipulated in a number of General Assembly resolutions, and the adoption in 2017 of the first treaty banning nuclear weapons, complementing

the objectives of the NPT and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. Those developments are clear indications that circumstances have changed on the international arena and that non-nuclear-weapon States that are genuinely committed to the principle of nuclear disarmament are looking for new ways to take serious measures for bridging existing gaps and dealing with the shortcomings of the current disarmament and non-proliferation regime. They also seek to address the risks linked to the continued possession of nuclear weapons by a limited number of States, including the risks linked to testing nuclear detonation. All those risks constitute an existential threat that the United Nations must tirelessly address, until the day when we will have rid the world and future generations of such weapons.

The Arab Group believes that the total elimination of such weapons is not only a realistic and implementable goal but also a prerequisite for the maintenance of international peace and security in a sustainable manner.

Mr. Umarov (Kazakhstan): Today we are celebrating the tenth anniversary of the International Day against Nuclear Tests. Indeed, 10 years ago the States Members of the United Nations unanimously supported Kazakhstan's initiative to establish this Day. It was on this very day 70 years ago that the first Soviet nuclear bomb was tested in my country. Again, on this same day in 1991 a unilateral decision was taken by my then President, Nursultan Nazarbayev, to officially close the Semipalatinsk test site. That remains an unprecedented action, as no other nuclear test site has been officially closed.

A declared moratorium on nuclear tests does not keep humankind safe from testing, as such a decision can be reversed at any time. Given the current geopolitical realities, we believe that the increased threat of the resumption of a nuclear arms race could lead to a new cycle of nuclear testing. This tenuous situation seriously undermines our efforts to establish a final ban on nuclear weapons.

I am very grateful to President Espinosa Garcés for having convened today's meeting in order to revitalize our joint efforts for a nuclear-weapon-free world so as to accelerate the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. All Member States must intensify, consolidate and revitalize their work to complete what has been started.

First, we must tirelessly continue pressing for the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), which is a highly illustrative example of mutual trust and confidence.

Secondly, we should work to achieve a complete ban on nuclear weapons. On 29 August, Kazakhstan deposited its ratification document for the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, and we call on others to follow suit. The 122 States that voted in favour of that historic Treaty in July 2017 must reaffirm their position in practice.

Thirdly, Member States should resolutely take more vigorous steps to commence a dialogue on the future of our planet; this discourse will be effective and successful only if the nuclear Powers are on board. Previously, the largest Powers had always assumed responsibility for the future of humankind. In the current situation, the archaic concept of strategic stability based on nuclear weapons should be revised.

Weapons of mass destruction cannot be the best tool for deterrence. As noted in Nursultan Nazarbayev's "Manifesto: The World. The 21st century", any force in turn gives rise to a new force. Such an endless race, be it in the nuclear field or in that of conventional weapons, will continue ceaselessly unless the political will to stop it prevails. The global coalition of States that cherish peace, stability, trust and security should therefore, under the auspices of the United Nations, totally oppose the archaic system of military blocs.

The tragic chapters of Kazakhstan's nuclear history are a vivid example of the fact that nuclear weapons and their consequences are incompatible with a safe and secure future for humankind. Our story is also a clear appeal for the early entry into force of the CTBT, so that no one in the world has to relive and suffer our destiny ever again. One and a half million people in Kazakhstan are still suffering the consequences of nuclear tests. What is most horrific is that the third and fourth generations of those affected continue to suffer.

That is why celebrating the International Day serves not only to recall the tragic consequences of nuclear weapons, but also to recognize and support all ongoing global efforts towards global zero.

This year on 29 August our capital, Nur-Sultan, hosted the biennial awards ceremony of the Nazarbayev Prize for a Nuclear-Weapon-Free World and Global Security. The prize was given to Mr. Lassina Zerbo and

the late Mr. Yukiya Amano for their notable achievements and tireless efforts to promote nuclear disarmament and maintain global security. The initiator of the prize, Nursultan Nazarbayev, noted the special contribution made by Mr. Amano, the former Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), to many of the Agency's historic landmark achievements, including the creation of an international nuclear-fuel bank in Kazakhstan. He also emphasized the efforts of Mr. Zerbo to strengthen the verification regime and establish the CTBT International Monitoring System. We once again congratulate Mr. Zerbo and hope that he will continue his rigorous drive so that the CTBT may soon enter into force. This is not a task for him alone but our common goal and responsibility.

On 29 August, another equally important event was also held in Kazakhstan — an international seminar on fostering cooperation among nuclear-weapon-free zones. This event, organized jointly by the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs and Kazakhstan, made a highly significant contribution towards consolidating all existing nuclear-weapon-free zones, uniting their positions and strengthening their role in nuclear disarmament.

These issues are among the main priorities of Kazakhstan's anti-nuclear thrust, as well as one of the important items on the Secretary-General's Agenda for Disarmament. Unfortunately, the Central Asian nuclear-weapon-free zone is still the last of its kind and the only one in the northern hemisphere, and we see the need for many more. We therefore advocate expanding the number of such zones, primarily in the Middle East.

Today's plenary is another reminder to all of the key noble objective of the United Nations, conceived in 1945. We hope that by 2045, the centenary of the United Nations, the world will have finally rid itself of the nuclear threat and our children will live in a safe and truly stable world.

Mr. Kickert (Austria): Austria fully aligns itself with the statement of the European Union to be delivered later, which lays out in detail our priorities with regard to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO).

We wish to commend Executive Director Lassina Zerbo on his leadership and dedication and the entire CTBTO team for its excellent work on ending nuclear weapons testing.

As we approach 75 years since the first nuclear weapons tests, we are entering a new global arms race with new and more advanced nuclear weapons being operationalized. A ban on nuclear weapon test explosions is therefore more important than ever for the global nuclear disarmament framework.

The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) is an indispensable cornerstone of the global nuclear non-proliferation effort. The CTBTO's quick provision of reliable and independent data showcases the effectiveness of its verification regime. With its International Monitoring System, on-site inspections and International Data Centre, the CTBTO does what no single country could do alone in terms of verifying the norm against nuclear testing. It provides an essential element of trust for a world free of nuclear weapons.

This being said, we note with concern the passing of another year without the entry into force of the CTBT. In a global environment in which other disarmament and non-proliferation treaties are being called into question, we must redouble our efforts to achieve the entry into force of the CTBT.

Despite the challenges facing global non-proliferation and disarmament efforts, the majority of countries remain firm in their commitment to a nuclear-weapon-free world. United in this purpose, we have achieved some important successes. As has been mentioned, on 7 July 2017, 122 Member States supported the adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). Just over two years later, the Treaty has been signed by 70 countries and ratified by 26, having passed the half-way point towards entry into force. We laud the highly symbolic ratification of the Treaty on the International Day Against Nuclear Tests on 29 August by Kazakhstan, a country whose population has had to endure terrible suffering as a result of nuclear tests.

The TPNW was drafted to implement article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and is fully compatible with the CTBT. It is now established as a key element of the global disarmament architecture, which it complements. The prohibition of nuclear weapons, just as with the other two categories of weapons of mass destruction, is essential to achieving elimination.

Continuing our progress towards nuclear disarmament and building on our successes within this architecture must remain a top priority for

the international community. The risk of a nuclear detonation by accident, design or misunderstanding has increased. Today's nuclear weapons are many times more destructive than those dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of a detonation are terrifyingly obvious.

Austria strongly subscribes to the Secretary-General's view that non-proliferation and disarmament lead to increased security. To delay action on disarmament under the pretext of security conditions is a blatant misjudgment and particularly dangerous in an environment of increased tensions and growing risk. It is exactly through disarmament and non-proliferation that we can begin to rebuild trust and improve global security.

The entry into force of a global norm against testing through the CTBT will be a key trust-building measure and a demonstration of States' willingness to work together to address the risks of nuclear proliferation. We can no longer listen to excuses as to why key States do not ratify the CTBT. They should get together with their perceived adversaries and finally ratify it. To them, I say, "just do it".

Ms. Rodríguez Abascal (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): We welcome the holding of this high-level meeting of the General Assembly.

The use of atomic bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki by the United States stands as a sad reminder for humankind of the grave danger posed by the mere existence of nuclear weapons and the threat they pose to the survival of the human race. As part of the commemoration of the International Day against Nuclear Tests, Cuba reiterates its position in favour of the total elimination of weapons nuclear and the goal of a world free of these weapons.

Our country, the fifth State to ratify the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), calls on States that have not done so to sign and ratify it so that it may promptly entry into force. The Treaty, in addition to proscribing nuclear weapons and the so-called nuclear deterrent doctrine and establishing a framework for the total and complete elimination of these weapons, prohibits any kind of test.

We express our deep concern at the Nuclear Posture Review of the United States, which reduces the threshold for the consideration of using nuclear weapons, even in response to so-called non-nuclear

strategic threats, and enables the resumption of nuclear explosive tests for the security and effectiveness of the nuclear arsenal of the United States. It is unacceptable that the nuclear-weapon States continue developing new nuclear weapons systems and updating their nuclear warheads, missiles, aerial launch systems, nuclear-weapon-production facilities and entire arsenals.

The United States, the world leader in conducting nuclear tests, carried out 1,032 tests between 1945 and 1992, and has conducted 29 subcritical nuclear tests since 1997, violating the spirit and the letter of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the TPNW. We support the total and effective prohibition of all nuclear tests, be they explosive, subcritical or carried out by other sophisticated methods. We also support the closure and dismantling of all facilities used for such purposes and the related infrastructure.

Subcritical tests and the significant increase in expenditure to improve such tests, the possibility that the United States resume explosive testing, the newly adopted United States Government nuclear policy entitled "Nuclear Operations" and that country's withdrawal from or non-compliance with nuclear disarmament and arms limitation agreements, such as the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, undermine international peace and security, the disarmament regime and nuclear non-proliferation.

The greater role of nuclear weapons in the defence and security doctrines of certain possessor States of those weapons is alarming and is a factor that accelerates their qualitative vertical proliferation. We condemn such positions, which put the world on the verge of a nuclear conflict. They are unjustifiable, unacceptable and contrary to obligations under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. We also strongly condemn the establishment of conditions for nuclear disarmament. We call on all States and civil society representatives to participate in the high-level plenary meeting of the Assembly to commemorate and promote the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons to be held on 26 September and to mobilize the international community towards achieving a world free of nuclear weapons before it is too late.

Our country is proud to belong to the first densely populated area in the world declared a nuclear-weapon-free zone, and reaffirms the relevance of the

Proclamation of Latin America and the Caribbean as a Zone of Peace, adopted at the second Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States. In that regard, we fully support the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East as an important step towards nuclear disarmament.

We reiterate that the only effective way to ensure that humankind no longer suffers the most terrible impact of nuclear weapons is their total elimination in a verifiable, transparent and irreversible manner. Nuclear-weapon States must provide States that do not possess them with universal, legally binding, unconditional and non-discriminatory guarantees that they will not use or threaten to use such weapons against them under any circumstances.

We have a moral responsibility to raise awareness of the threat from nuclear weapons and to work for a world free of nuclear weapons for the benefit of present and future generations.

Mr. Lam Padilla (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, I would like to thank the President of the General Assembly for convening this plenary meeting to commemorate the International Day against Nuclear Tests. We also thank the Permanent Mission of Kazakhstan for its ongoing efforts to address the issue.

Guatemala reaffirms its commitment to the shared goal of a nuclear-free world. As a State party to most international treaties on the issue, we attach particular importance to their effective implementation. My delegation is proud also to belong to the first densely populated area in the world to be declared a nuclear-weapon-free zone. The establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Latin America and the Caribbean has contributed not only to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation but also to regional peace and security in the world.

We believe that the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones strengthens international peace and security. We recognize that the only guarantee against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons is their total elimination. The use of nuclear weapons is a crime against humanity, a violation of international law, including international humanitarian law, and a clear violation of the Charter of the United Nations, in particular its first provision, which is to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal

of threats to the peace. In that regard, my country believes that prohibition facilitates elimination. Prohibiting nuclear weapons is an important first step for their elimination.

In that connection, my delegation reiterates its satisfaction with the signing of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which is a milestone and a fundamental step towards nuclear disarmament. On 20 September 2017, Guatemala therefore signed the instrument. We are currently in the final phase of the legislative adoption and ratification process.

I reiterate the importance and necessity of the early entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and urge all States in the region whose ratification is important and essential for its entry into force to ratify it, thereby accelerating its signature and ratification process. We urge States Members of the Organization to refrain from conducting nuclear tests, other nuclear explosions or any other relevant non-explosive tests, including subcritical tests and those conducted through simulation, in order to develop and improve nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. Such actions run counter to the objective and purpose of the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime and to the obligations and provisions contained in the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. Along those lines, we would like to highlight initiatives with regard to the suspension of nuclear tests, which also violate Security Council resolutions and the various treaties on that topic.

In the current complex context of international peace and security, it is more urgent than ever to pursue the goal of nuclear disarmament. The danger that such weapons represent for the survival of humankind is worrisome. However, we have a moral responsibility to raise awareness of the threat posed by nuclear weapons and tests and the obligation to work towards a world free of such weapons.

Mrs. Zappia (Italy): Italy aligns itself with the statement to be delivered later by the observer of the European Union and would like to make some additional remarks in its national capacity.

Every year this high-level meeting provides a fresh opportunity to increase the public awareness on the devastating effects of nuclear weapons and of nuclear testing on the environment and human lives. It also allows us to further highlight the need for the cessation

of any nuclear testing and to restate our commitment to the ultimate goal of a peaceful and secure world free of nuclear weapons. It is a goal that, in our view, can be attained through a progressive approach based on concrete and verifiable measures aimed at enhancing mutual confidence and enhancing the advancement of solid international security.

In that regard, while the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is the overarching norm on which all nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation measures are based, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) represents one of the pillars of the multilateral disarmament and non-proliferation architecture established by the NPT. By banning any nuclear weapon-test explosion or any other nuclear explosion, it in fact counters the development and qualitative improvement of nuclear weapons and helps prevent nuclear competition.

Regrettably, more than 20 years after its opening for signature, the CTBT has not yet entered into force. It has, however, achieved two very important goals. It has paved the way for a moratorium on nuclear testing, which we call on all States to maintain, and, through its related organization, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO), it has created a highly effective global verification regime, of which the invaluable role in quickly providing trustworthy and independent data has been repeatedly demonstrated. But progress along the way towards disarmament and non-proliferation requires that the current voluntary moratorium on nuclear-test explosions be translated into a binding norm through the entry into force of the CTBT.

Italy has always been a staunch supporter of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test Ban Treaty, and has fully supported Algeria and Germany, the co-coordinators of the article XIV process, in their efforts to advance the Treaty's cause. Italy joins their plea to all States that have not yet done so, in particular to the remaining eight annex 2 States, to sign and ratify the Treaty. We hope that Security Council resolution 2310 (2016), which Italy co-sponsored, will actually encourage further ratifications, and we look forward to the upcoming article XIV Conference, on 25 September, as another important awareness-raising event.

In that spirit, we also urge the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to give concrete proof of its asserted

willingness to denuclearize — by engaging in credible and meaningful negotiations towards a complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization of the Korean peninsula, returning to the Non-Proliferation Treaty and signing and ratifying the CTBT. From a technical point of view, we are of the view that the denuclearization process in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea could also benefit from the CTBTO's expertise.

At the same time, we call on the international community to continue lending its support to the completion of the CTBT verification regime, even prior to the entry into force of the Treaty, so as to further improve its monitoring capacity and ability to provide accurate data analysis. As a by-product of the International Monitoring System (IMS), let me also stress the many benefits that the international community can draw from the civil and scientific application of its data, including for tsunami and volcanic ash-cloud warning. Active collaboration among States, the signatories and the Provisional Technical Secretariat is key not only to ensure the timely installation, certification and maintenance of the IMS stations worldwide, but also the highest data availability and quality at all times and the continuous improvement of the CTBTO monitoring capacity.

The current threats to global peace and security make it more pressing than ever to renew all efforts towards the universalization and, ultimately, entry into force of the CTBT. Our shared commitment is crucial to reaching that goal. Each and every country has a role to play. Italy invites all partners to work closely together to build up political momentum, translate it into action and, eventually, turn it into reality.

Mr. Bessho (Japan): The prohibition of nuclear testing has been a critically important and effective pillar in advancing nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. By constraining the development and qualitative improvement of nuclear weapons, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) worked as a break on the global nuclear arms race. Although we do not have enough ratifications of the Treaty for it to enter into force, the existence of the International Day against Nuclear Tests bears testimony to the existence of a de facto international norm against nuclear testing.

We are currently witnessing a deteriorating security environment, a divergence of views on

nuclear disarmament and the growing threat of the proliferation of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. Against that backdrop, we must resume realistic measures, with the cooperation of both nuclear-weapon States and non-nuclear-weapon States. Japan believes that the CTBT is one of the most important platforms in which both sides participate.

It is deeply regrettable that some Member States have not yet signed and ratified the CTBT and that the Treaty has not yet come into force. Further signatures and ratifications will help strengthen the norm against nuclear testing and create momentum for nuclear disarmament. We especially call upon the remaining eight annex 2 States to sign and ratify the Treaty without further delay.

In that context, we welcome the ratification by Zimbabwe in February. As a strong supporter of the CTBT, Japan is ready to support international efforts through capacity-building. We have welcomed a total of 254 trainees from 75 States to global seismological observation training since 1995 and will continue further contributions for countries in need of assistance.

Japan also welcomes the continued development of the CTBT verification regime. With nearly 300 verified International Monitoring System (IMS) stations now operating worldwide, the verification regime proved its effectiveness by detecting all six nuclear tests conducted by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. We believe that developing the IMS will contribute as a confidence-building measure between the nuclear-weapon States and the non-nuclear-weapon States. The capability of the IMS depends upon data availability. I would like to encourage all signatories to send relevant data to the International Data Centre.

With regard to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, we will remain committed to the goal of achieving the complete, verifiable and irreversible dismantlement of all its nuclear weapons, existing nuclear programmes and related facilities, in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions. We call upon all members of the international community to fully implement the relevant Security Council resolutions.

Next year will mark the fiftieth anniversary of the entry into force of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). It will also be 75 years since nuclear weapons were first used. In such a milestone year, the world is expecting a meaningful outcome of the NPT Review Conference. We will require efforts

by all the parties. Japan looks forward to continuing to work closely with all Member States towards realizing a world free of nuclear weapons.

Mr. Koba (Indonesia): Indonesia aligns itself with the statement made by the representative of Thailand on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

Indonesia views nuclear weapons as the existential threat to humankind. Their total elimination is the only guarantee to avoid global catastrophes, for which the banning of nuclear tests is an essential part. Therefore, we have to endeavour to make our commemoration today meaningful by ensuring, through concrete actions, that nuclear tests, anywhere and by anyone, are totally prohibited.

Given the escalating geopolitical tensions, the urgency for the total ban on nuclear tests cannot be understated. It will prevent further development, modernization and any acquisitions of nuclear weapons, as well as reduce avenues for arms races. Indonesia calls on all stakeholders to fully play their role in order to create a world free of nuclear weapons. In addition, we underline following.

First, our observance today should also commemorate those whose lives have been greatly affected by tests, anywhere and by any country, as also indicated in the Secretary-General's message. No country or people can be totally free from the risks and consequences of the impact of nuclear tests. Regrettably, more than 2,000 nuclear tests have been conducted in the past seven decades, with devastating impact on the environment, health, food security and economic development. The people in the regions where those tests took place often had little or no say, despite the tests' long-term consequences. In 1954, Indonesia commissioned a national investigation on the possible radioactivity impact of various nuclear tests taking place in the Pacific Ocean. Today's commemoration must also mean that the situation in all those regions that underwent nuclear-test explosions is not forgotten. They must be assisted adequately.

Secondly, Indonesia fully supports the total ban on nuclear tests embodied in the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). The CTBT, along with other instruments, such as nuclear-weapon-free zones and the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which, at the core, shares the same objective as the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, are essential building blocks for advancing nuclear disarmament.

The entry into force of the CTBT should be expedited. The Treaty is a legally binding assurance against nuclear tests, which is an essential building block for a nuclear-weapon-free world. Indonesia has fulfilled its responsibilities, including with the ratification of the CTBT in 2012. We welcome its signing by Tuvalu and ratification by Thailand and Zimbabwe. We also thank the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization Preparatory Commission for its work on the development of a sound and non-discriminatory verification regime. Furthermore, we welcome the contribution of the International Monitoring System (IMS), through civilian and scientific applications, including the provision of timely and accurate data on tsunamis and earthquakes. Indonesia contributes six certified seismic auxiliary stations to the IMS network.

Thirdly, while underscoring the responsibility of nuclear-weapon States to undertake their disarmament commitments, we appreciate those who, in practice, have in place a moratorium on nuclear tests. Indonesia reiterates the imperative of a permanent and total stop to nuclear tests and calls on the remaining eight annex 2 countries to ratify the CTBT as soon as possible, in line with Security Council resolution 2310 (2016), which will ensure that the CTBT enters into force. In raising awareness about the dangers of, and advocating for, the norm against nuclear tests, we also value the partnerships with the relevant civil society organizations.

Let me conclude by emphasizing that we must cooperate and fulfil our respective responsibilities for fostering enduring peace and security everywhere. We must not forget that we safeguard the world as a sacred trust for future generations.

Mr. De la Fuente Ramírez (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mexico is grateful for convening today's meeting and thanks the Secretary-General for his statement. We also thank Kazakhstan for its leadership in promoting the International Day against Nuclear Tests as a constant reminder of the urgent need to achieve and sustain a world free of nuclear weapons.

Banning and eliminating nuclear tests is vital in efforts to halt horizontal and vertical nuclear proliferation. While we welcome the unilateral moratorium on nuclear tests by some actors, they can never replace a legally binding norm, achieved through multilateral negotiations, to ban testing and verify compliance. Therefore, we again call on the eight States whose signature and/or ratification is required for the

entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty to willingly and unconditionally adhere to the Treaty.

Ending nuclear testing is a step towards general and complete disarmament under strict international control. The non-proliferation and disarmament regime must be strengthened and respected by everyone. There are reasons to be concerned about the current context. We are opposed to a new arms race, the expansion of existing nuclear arsenals, the deployment of ever-more powerful nuclear missile systems and the development of new weaponry that could have serious consequences for international security and whose humanitarian and environmental impact we know would be disastrous. We disagree with those who advocate nuclear weapons and their use. Such weapons are an ongoing threat to everyone's survival and undermine trust and international law.

Mexico, in line with its commitment to the call for disarmament, will continue actively promoting the complete prohibition of nuclear testing and the entry into force of the CTBT at the General Assembly through the annual draft resolution we submit with Australia and New Zealand. We urge all States Members of the United Nations to support the draft resolution.

The CTBT article XIV Conference scheduled to be held at the end of the month should not merely reiterate intentions without making genuine political compromises and determining consequences. The entry into force of the CTBT is essential given the critical international security situation in which we find ourselves.

We must continue building a safer world — one at peace and based on law and international cooperation, not on the unacceptable threat of use of force or, much less, the threat of use of weapons of mass destruction.

Mrs. Azucena (Philippines): The Philippines associates itself with the statement delivered earlier today by the representative of Thailand on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

The Philippines joins the international community in celebrating the International Day against Nuclear Tests. We recognize the commendable leadership of Kazakhstan in vigorously pursuing the purposes we celebrate today. We are reminded of the importance of a concerted effort against nuclear tests, the latest of which were regrettably conducted in 2017 and 2018.

We are reminded of the closure of the Semipalatinsk test site, as well as the close to 1.5 million people in Kazakhstan who suffered from the effects of nuclear testing. We note that approximately 3,000 Kazakh nuclear-test victims have been issued compensation since the beginning of this year.

Recognizing the destructive effect on the environment of nuclear testing and the horrendous effect of the use of nuclear weapons, the Philippines signed the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) in 1996 and deposited its instrument of ratification in 2001. The Philippines continues to support the Treaty and its earliest possible ratification.

If nuclear weapons still hold some attraction, their lethal efficacy having already been proved, what need, then, is there for tests? Further testing can mean only the progressive refinement of their yield, destructiveness, dependability of delivery and targeting accuracy. But every step forward in those respects is a step backward in nuclear weaponry's deterrent effect, which was never so great as when nuclear-weapon stockpiles were so enormous in yield and limitless destruction that no one could contemplate their use for any purpose, thereby producing the long peace of the balance of nuclear terror.

That morally repugnant benefit stands to be lost by continued testing. As those weapons become more sophisticated through improvements to their capacity for discriminating use, the temptation to use them increases and the argument for their use becomes more compelling. Bearing in mind the significance of the CTBT, we join others in urging the eight remaining annex 2 States to sign and ratify the Treaty as soon as possible to bring it into force.

The 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, which was presided over by the Philippines, reaffirmed the essential role of the CTBT. The outcome document affirms that the Treaty combats both horizontal and vertical proliferation and, as I argued, weakens their deterrent virtue through the cessation of all nuclear weapon-test explosions and all other nuclear explosions, by constraining the development and qualitative improvement of nuclear weapons and ending the development of advanced new types of nuclear weapons.

The Philippines, as a member of ASEAN, notes that the provision in the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon Free Zone Treaty — which states that each State party shall undertake not to allow the existence of nuclear

weapons in its territory — says, in effect, that there shall be no testing or use of nuclear weapons in the zone.

We join ASEAN in welcoming the third summit between President Trump and Leader Kim Jong-un on 30 June and hope that negotiations between the two countries will resume soon to attain progress and maintain the momentum in finding a lasting solution in the Korean peninsula. The Philippines notes the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's stated commitment to complete denuclearization and its pledge to refrain from further nuclear and missile tests during this period. The Philippines supports a careful and critical engagement that promotes the strengthening of an international legal landscape that expressly delegitimizes nuclear testing. We urge the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to abide by all relevant Security Council resolutions and international efforts to bring about the complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization of the Korean peninsula, which will contribute to peace and stability in the region.

Mr. Takht Ravanchi (Islamic Republic of Iran): I thank the President of the General Assembly for convening this meeting to commemorate the International Day against Nuclear Tests. I would also like to commend the efforts of Kazakhstan in proposing and promoting this valuable initiative. The observance of this International Day continuously reminds us of the need for a complete ban on any and all types of nuclear explosion. This commemoration will be incomplete if we do not recall the destructive environmental effects of such tests, most of which have been carried out outside the territory of the countries conducting them, inflicting damage upon the civilian population.

Commemorating this International Day also provides us with an opportunity to review progress made in achieving a universal ban on nuclear explosions and the broader objective of nuclear disarmament. While we made certain progress in the past, unfortunately there are currently two alarming races: a new nuclear-arms race and a nuclear arms-modernization race. At a time when certain nuclear-weapon States have plans to develop new easy-to-use nuclear weapons, ending nuclear weapon-test explosions is of the utmost importance.

However, while nuclear-weapon States have the primary responsibility to that end, regrettably, some of them are responsible for the current situation. The living example is the United States, which, according to its

latest Nuclear Posture Review, will not seek ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and will resume nuclear-explosive testing, including underground nuclear-explosive testing. That policy is in gross violation of its explicit legal obligations under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the unequivocal commitments it assumed in Review Conferences of the Treaty. Such irresponsible policies, the latest of which is the United States withdrawal from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, are detrimental to all international efforts towards nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation and must therefore come to an end. The current situation attests to the fact that, no matter how important the voluntary moratoriums on nuclear tests are, they cannot substitute for a comprehensive, universal and verifiable legally binding prohibition on all types of nuclear explosions, including in alternative ways.

By observing this International Day, we should also redouble our efforts in pursuing the noble objective of the total elimination of nuclear weapons — the only absolute guarantee against the threat or use of these inhumane weapons. That is essential for the maintenance of peace and security, in particular in such a volatile region as the Middle East, where Israeli nuclear weapons continue to threaten the peace and security of the region and beyond. The total elimination of these inhumane weapons is what we owe to ourselves, our children, generations to come and to the whole of humankind. This is a moral imperative and an explicit responsibility. Let us remain united, resolute and steadfast and fulfil this responsibility collectively and responsibly. Iran stands ready to play its role in pursuing this noble objective.

Mr. Vieira (Brazil): The delegation of Brazil would like to thank the President of the General Assembly, Ms. Maria Fernanda Espinosa Garcés, for convening this high-level meeting. We would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his opening statement.

Brazil extends its appreciation to the Provisional Technical Secretariat of the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) Organization through its Executive Secretary, Mr. Lassina Zerbo, for their untiring efforts towards building up the Treaty's verification regime, thereby ensuring the continued credibility and relevance of the CTBT.

More than ever before, significant and urgent steps are needed towards the entry into force of the CTBT, the cessation of all forms of nuclear tests and the total and irreversible elimination of all nuclear arsenals within a specified time frame. Brazil reaffirms its condemnation of any kind of experiment aimed at developing and modernizing nuclear weapons, whether through explosive tests or any other means, including subcritical tests. Such activities are contrary to the purpose and the spirit of the CTBT.

A genuine undertaking to live up to the goals of the CTBT is essential to the credibility and sustainability of the nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament regime. We must redouble our efforts to explore all avenues to ensure the entry into force of the CTBT. In that regard, we renew our call to each of the remaining eight annex 2 States, which have yet to ratify the Treaty, to do so without delay. In that regard, I wish to reaffirm our sincere appreciation to the Permanent Missions of Algeria and Germany to the United Nations in Vienna for their efforts to prepare the upcoming conference on facilitating the entry into force of the CTBT, also known as the Article XIV Conference, to be held here in New York at the end of this month.

It is estimated that more than 2,000 nuclear-weapon tests have been carried out to date. Those regrettable experiments have had enduring, indiscriminate and unacceptable effects on both human health and the environment, which are still being felt and will continue to affect generations to come. Those tests have contributed to raising awareness with regard to the unacceptable humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons, which paved the way towards the adoption, in 2017, of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons — the most important step taken in the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime in decades.

Only by prohibiting nuclear weapons and providing for their transparent, verifiable and irreversible elimination can we confidently look forward to a future in which they shall never be employed again, under any circumstances, by any actor. This conviction continues to guide Brazil's unwavering commitment to both the CTBT and the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and to the values they represent.

Mr. Bahr Aluloom (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank Ms. Espinosa Garcés, President of the General Assembly at its seventy-third

session, for the statement she delivered earlier. We also highly appreciate the statement delivered by Secretary-General António Guterres. I would further like to express our gratitude for the important elements that Mr. Zerbo, Executive Secretary of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization, presented to us earlier. We also welcome the efforts of Kazakhstan to commemorate today's occasion.

My country's delegation aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of the Kingdom of Bahrain on behalf of the Group of Arab States.

History has irrefutably shown that the arms race has resulted only in creating every manner of destruction for humankind and an increase in human victims. Its impact is not limited to humankind, but extends to the environment, nature and various sectors of life. In that context, the Government of my country stresses once again the importance of striving to achieve the total and final elimination of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction so as to establish a world free of such catastrophic weapons and ensure a safe and prosperous future for us and succeeding generations. Achieving that goal will require our collective efforts.

The Government of my country is aware that promoting the universality of all conventions and treaties concerning nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction and global compliance therewith, without discrimination, as well as the final and total elimination of such weapons, would be a milestone achievement for the international community and a genuine guarantee against the use or threat of use of weapons of mass destruction, leading to international peace and security.

The Government of Iraq believes that the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) is one of the most important instruments for ending nuclear testing. The entry into force of the Treaty and the achievement of its universality are a political and moral responsibility of all members of the international community without exception. For that reason, Iraq, together with the friendly country of the Kingdom of Belgium, co-chaired the 2017 Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the CTBT.

I take this opportunity to reiterate my country's unwavering commitment to holding the eleventh session of Article XIV Conference in New York on 25 September, with the support of Member States and the two countries of the upcoming presidency of the

XIV Conference, namely, sisterly Algeria and friendly Germany. We assure them of our support for achieving the CTBT goals that have been set out.

We also reiterate our call on the eight States listed in annex 2 to ratify the Treaty so that it can enter into force and achieve universality as soon as possible. That is necessary so that we can benefit from its role in strengthening the nuclear non-proliferation regime, and efforts must be supported to establish zones free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destructions, including in the Middle East.

In that regard, my country's delegation underscores the importance of the participation of all the countries of the Middle East in the conference, to be held in November under the chairmanship of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, on negotiations for a binding instrument to establish a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East.

In conclusion, my country's delegation stands ready to cooperate with the international community and to support all efforts to strengthen the nuclear non-proliferation regime in order to bring about a world free of nuclear testing, thereby strengthening international peace and security.

Mr. Yu Peng (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The complete prohibition and comprehensive destruction of nuclear weapons, the elimination of the threat of nuclear war and the establishment of a world free of nuclear weapons are in line with the shared interests of humankind. The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) is an important pillar of the international nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime. It is vital to the maintenance of world peace and security.

Currently, given the mounting global security challenges and risks, nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation remain an arduous task and much remains to be done, while the global strategic balance and stability continue to be challenged.

In that regard, it is imperative for the international community to collectively uphold the important role of the CTBT in curbing a nuclear-arms race and lowering the risk of nuclear war. Countries must work together to build a community of shared future for humankind, foster a vision of common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security and build a world of lasting peace and universal security. Nuclear-weapon States

must resolutely safeguard the purposes and principles of the Treaty, abide by their commitment to enforcing the moratorium on nuclear tests and unconditionally commit to no first use of nuclear weapons and no use or threat of use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States.

China has always stood for the total prohibition and complete elimination of nuclear weapons. China has committed unconditionally to no first use of nuclear weapons and to not using or threatening to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States or nuclear-weapon-free zones. As one of the first countries to sign the CTBT, China has consistently and steadfastly upheld the purposes and objectives of the Treaty, honoured its moratorium, engaged deeply in all the work of the Preparatory Commission of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization and supported all relevant General Assembly resolutions, as well as Security Council resolution 2310 (2016).

China has been firmly committed to working to promote the early entry into force of the CTBT. In recent years, China has achieved significant progress in the construction, certification and acceptance of the monitoring stations, thereby testifying to its unwavering support of the CTBT. The eleventh Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty will take place on 25 September, here in New York. China is eager for the Conference to further consolidate the consensus on the international nuclear test ban and inject political momentum into the process for the entry into force of the CTBT.

Mr. Ndong Mba (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Government of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea, through its delegation, takes the floor in this high-level 104th plenary meeting of the General Assembly at its seventy-third session to address an issue of vital importance —the celebration and promotion of the International Day against Nuclear Tests.

Our delegation congratulates President María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés, Secretary-General António Guterres and all members of the Bureau, as well as the heads of the United Nations agencies on disarmament matters, on the progress achieved in this domain. I also extend our congratulations to all colleagues, representatives of international, regional and non-governmental organizations, civil society, jurists and academia, who are all united in our firm intention

to actively work together to achieve the purpose and objective of promoting the International Day against Nuclear Tests.

There is no justification for the manufacture, stockpiling, marketing and use of weapons of mass destruction by any actor or under any pretext or circumstance. It is therefore clear to the Republic of Equatorial Guinea that the elimination and total prohibition of nuclear tests must always be a priority on the international community's agenda, especially in the General Assembly. The urgency and need to continue implementing all the provisions of the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological Weapons Convention thus becomes more evident. Our delegation reiterates the considerable value of both Conventions for achieving international peace and security.

Today, the use of nuclear weapons is universally considered to be contrary to international law and international humanitarian law and is stigmatized by public opinion. Although we welcome the significant advances made in the destruction of nuclear weapons and the total prohibition of tests of such weapons, we are aware that much work remains to be done, and the latest actions indicate to us that the threat remains latent. This is the right time to ensure the full implementation of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and the Treaty Banning Nuclear Weapon Tests in the Atmosphere, in Outer Space and Under Water.

As we all know, there is no country or organization that is prepared to address the serious humanitarian repercussions of the use of nuclear weapons; we must therefore bear in mind that their use entails serious consequences that transcend all borders. Moreover, these repercussions threaten human life, the environment, sustainable development, the world economy, food security and the health of present and future generations. That is why the Government of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea is currently in the process of ratifying the CTBT.

Allow me to conclude by reiterating the readiness of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea to maintain its committed support and promotion of all efforts to realize international peace, stability and security, human rights and the total prohibition of nuclear tests. I also reiterate the unequivocal position of our country and Government against the production, stockpiling, distribution, marketing and use of weapons of mass

destruction, irrespective of the entity, circumstances or place.

Mr. Jehanzeb Khan (Pakistan): Let me begin by thanking Ms. Espinosa Garcés, President of the General Assembly, for convening this meeting and the panellists for their inspiring messages and valuable contributions. We would particularly like to thank Mr. Lassina Zerbo, Executive Secretary of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO), for his presence here today and for his remarks.

International efforts to end nuclear tests are vital to achieving the goal of a nuclear-weapon-free world. Nuclear tests not only have adverse effects on human health and the environment, but they also create mistrust among States, aggravate regional and international tensions and contribute to a nuclear arms race, thereby undermining regional and global strategic stability. Nuclear tests also result in the diversion of valuable resources much needed for supporting our efforts to achieve sustainable development.

Pakistan participated actively and constructively in the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) negotiations and voted in favour of its subsequent adoption by the General Assembly in 1996. We have since been voting in favour of the annual CTBT resolution in the First Committee and in the General Assembly. Pakistan is also an accredited observer State of the CTBTO Preparatory Commission and regularly attends its meetings.

Pakistan has taken tangible measures to demonstrate its commitment and support to the objectives and purposes of the Treaty. Despite compelling regional security dynamics, Pakistan has maintained a voluntary moratorium on nuclear testing since 1998. As my delegation has underscored on many occasions, Pakistan was not the first to conduct a nuclear test in South Asia and will not be the first to resume testing. Our decision to sign the CTBT would be guided by our regional security dynamics. We believe that regional and global efforts complement each other and should be pursued in parallel.

Since the introduction of nuclear tests in our region in 1974, Pakistan has made several proposals aimed at keep South Asia free of nuclear weapons and their means of delivery. In the context of our region, Pakistan has proposed a bilateral arrangement to India on a nuclear test ban. That could go a long way towards strengthening the global norm against nuclear testing

and promoting regional stability. Furthermore, the debate in the Nuclear Suppliers Group on membership criteria for States not party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons affords Group members another opportunity to strengthen the norm on non-testing of nuclear weapons.

Pakistan remains committed to the goal of a nuclear-weapon free world. We believe that nuclear disarmament can be achieved only as a cooperative and universally agreed undertaking, through a consensus-based process that involves all stakeholders and results in equal and undiminished security for all States. Towards that end, it is critical to recognize and address the key motivations that drive States like Pakistan to possess nuclear weapons.

These include, first, threats from larger military forces, both nuclear and conventional; secondly, the existence of long-standing disputes with more powerful States and the failure of the United Nations to implement its own resolutions to solve such disputes; thirdly, the failure of the collective security system of the United Nations to deter aggression and military threats; and finally, discrimination in the application of international norms and standards. These legitimate motivations are different from those of States that retain nuclear weapons as a matter of prestige, either to maintain or attain the status of a global power.

Mr. Ngundze (South Africa): My delegation would like to thank the President for organizing this meeting. We welcome the insightful remarks delivered this morning by the Secretary-General. Likewise, we appreciate the detailed briefing made by Mr. Lassina Zerbo, Executive Director of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO).

My delegation aligns itself with the statement made by the representative of Uganda on behalf of the Group of African States.

My delegation welcomes the convening of this high-level meeting of the General Assembly to commemorate the International Day against Nuclear Tests as a unique opportunity for the international community to highlight the dangers and threats posed to international peace and security by nuclear tests, and to pay tribute to those who have been victims of nuclear-weapon-test explosions. As we commemorate this important day on the calendar of the General Assembly, it is appropriate to reflect on the current challenges and opportunities facing the realization and strengthening of global norms

against nuclear tests and towards nuclear disarmament, in general.

This year's commemoration is taking place against the backdrop of deep concerns about the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of a nuclear-weapon detonation, whether by accident or design. Those concerns have been further heightened by the escalating vertical and horizontal development of nuclear arsenals and their means of delivery, perpetuated by those that possess them.

It is also worth noting that the suspension of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty has added a very negative dimension to efforts to reach a world free of nuclear weapons. My delegation therefore joins the majority of Member States in urging the nuclear-weapon States and those that possess such weapons to make urgent progress towards the achievement of the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

My delegation is of the firm view that today's commemoration should be a constant reminder of the importance of the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) as a cornerstone of our collective endeavours to prevent both vertical and horizontal proliferation of nuclear weapons and as a solid foundation for achieving a world free of nuclear weapons. In that context, we wish to join in the sentiment that has been shared during this meeting in expressing our concerns about the lack of progress in the ratification of the CTBT by the eight remaining annex 2 States.

South Africa believes that the failure to bring the CTBT into force will weaken and undermine the nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament machinery and thereby deal a heavy blow to the international community's quest for a world free from the threat of nuclear devastation. We have repeatedly expressed our view that until the CTBT enters into force, it is essential for countries to continue to observe the moratorium on nuclear explosions of any kind. That moratorium, however, should not become a viable, long-term replacement for the legally binding commitment of State signatories of the CTBT upon its entry into force.

South Africa will continue to play an active role in the work of the CTBTO, from both a technical and a political perspective.

We join others in expressing our heartfelt condolences at the passing of Mr. Yukiya Amano.

His tireless commitment and sterling work at the International Atomic Energy Agency will never be forgotten.

In conclusion, South Africa commend the Executive Secretary of the CTBTO, Mr. Lassina Zerbo, and his team in Vienna and in New York for their tireless efforts in promoting the universalization of the Treaty and for ensuring that, despite the existing challenges, the work of the CTBTO Preparatory Commission continues unabated. We wish to congratulate our neighbour, Zimbabwe, on ratifying the Treaty and becoming the 168th State Party to join the CTBT.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the observer of the European Union.

Mr. Gonzato (European Union): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU). The candidate countries of the Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania; the country of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina; and the European Free Trade Association country Liechtenstein, member of the European Economic Area; as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia, align themselves with this statement.

This high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the occasion of the International Day against Nuclear Tests is an opportunity to again highlight the need for the entry into force and universalization of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), which was reaffirmed by Security Council resolution 2310 (2016). The CTBT is one of the key pillars of the international disarmament and non-proliferation architecture contributing to global peace and security. The Treaty's strong legitimacy and vital importance to our collective security is pointed out in the annual General Assembly resolutions relating to the CTBT.

The EU will continue to voice its support for the CTBT and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO) in multilateral forums, including at the 2020 Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). We urge all States that have yet to sign or ratify the CTBT to do so without any preconditions or further delay. In line with Council resolution 2310 (2016), we encourage a variety of initiatives to engage with the remaining annex 2 States — Egypt, China, Iran, Israel and the United States — that have yet to ratify the Treaty, as well as the Democratic People's Republic of

Korea, India and Pakistan, which still have to sign and ratify it for it to enter into force.

The EU member States have done their part by ratifying the Treaty years ago. We welcome the latest signature by Tuvalu and ratification by Zimbabwe, bringing the number of ratifying countries to 168. We encourage high-level attendance by all States, signatory and non-signatory alike, at the Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty on 25 September. We encourage the Provisional Technical Secretariat to continue to proactively promote the CTBT and join forces with civil society. In this context, we welcome the work of the CTBTO Youth Group.

Pending the entry into force of the Treaty, we call on all States to refrain from conducting any action contrary to the object and purpose of the Treaty. We also call on all States to maintain moratoriums on nuclear weapons, test explosions and other nuclear explosions.

The EU urges the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to embark on a credible path towards complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization and to immediately comply with all relevant Security Council resolutions. The EU encourages the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in particular to further engage in meaningful discussions with all relevant parties as the international community works towards lasting peace and security on the Korean peninsula. We call on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to give effect to its stated intention to end nuclear testing by signing and ratifying the CTBT. The EU hopes for tangible progress leading to the verifiable dismantlement of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's nuclear test sites. In this context, the CTBT Organization and its expertise could make an important contribution.

Following the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's nuclear tests, the CTBTO demonstrated its invaluable role in quickly providing reliable and independent data, enabling the international community to respond appropriately and swiftly. The CTBTO has provided the world with a truly global high-technology monitoring system for nuclear explosions, something that no single country could do. The EU reiterates its confidence in the CTBT's verification regime and looks forward to the completion of the International Monitoring System (IMS).

We recognize the deterrent effect against non-compliance with the Treaty and the ability to

respond to threats to international peace and security that it provides. We urge all State signatories that still have to establish stations to cooperate with the Provisional Technical Secretariat to that effect and the relevant State signatories to assist in this process.

With construction of the International Monitoring System ongoing for more than 20 years, there is no excuse for further delay in certifying and operating all stations. In addition to the CTBT's obvious contribution to international peace and security, the CTBTO's integrated capacity-building assists States in using IMS data for civil and scientific applications and research associated with Treaty-related verification technologies, including tsunami and volcanic-ash-cloud warning.

To make the best use of our collective investment, the EU also advocates fully exploiting the potential benefits of the civil and scientific applications of IMS data and financially supports capacity-building for developing countries in this regard. However, the CTBTO can carry out its mandatory functions only if provided with the funding necessary to support the completion and the sustainability of these tools. We therefore call upon all concerned States to honour their financial obligations and step up their political support for the CTBT and CTBTO.

Since 2006 the EU has provided the CTBT Organization with voluntary contributions of more than €23 million to fund a variety of technical projects to strengthen the verification regime and build capacity in developing countries. In February 2018, a seventh Council of the European Union decision was adopted pledging more than €4.5 million in order to continue the EU's long-standing support for the strengthening of the CTBT Organization's monitoring and verification capabilities.

As a further sign of our commitment, the EU has decided to become a supporter of four actions in the Secretary-General's agenda for disarmament, including the one on promoting the entry into force of the CTBT.

To conclude, we will continue to use every opportunity to advocate for the CTBT's prompt entry into force and universalization in the relevant international forums and in meeting with countries that have not yet signed or ratified the Treaty.

Mr. Ruidíaz Pérez (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, my delegation would like to thank the

President for having convened this commemorative meeting on such a sensitive issue for the world and for all States Members of the United Nations.

In recent years my country has devoted a substantial portion of its statements in disarmament and non-proliferation forums to exposing and denouncing the existence today of around 15,000 atomic weapons, of which approximately 2,000 are on maximum alert status, as well as the fact that although the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) has existed for more than 20 years, it has not yet entered into force.

We have also deplored the paralysis of the disarmament machinery and the existence of very costly nuclear-arsenal- modernization programmes. Despite the current complex international context, Chile continues to believe that coexistence in a world without nuclear weapons is possible and that maintaining international peace and security without resorting to nuclear deterrence is not only possible but an ethical imperative, in line with the international system of human rights protection.

Today's commemoration of the International Day against Nuclear Tests is clear proof that the responsibility for disarmament rests with us all, not just the nuclear-weapon States. But these actions must be followed up by tangible facts. We must redouble diplomatic efforts with the annex 2 countries of the CTBT, which still need to ratify the Treaty, so as to establish a specific action plan with a timeline within which those States commit to the significant legal corpus of the multilateral architecture of disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation.

Chile believes that the CTBT and the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, once they have entered into force, will stand alongside the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean and the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. All of this will pave the way to eliminating these weapons of mass destruction in a transparent, verifiable and irreversible manner, within a clearly established timeline.

Once again, Chile wishes to reiterate its call on those countries that have not ratified the CTBT, particularly the eight annex 2 countries, to do so without delay. My country reiterates once again its absolute commitment to the disarmament and non-proliferation agenda and

to the strengthening of the human rights system and international humanitarian law.

Mr. Hermida Castillo (Nicaragua) (*spoke in Spanish*): The delegation of Nicaragua would like to congratulate the President on this initiative, which serves to raise awareness among us about the importance of eradicating nuclear testing once and for all and seizing this opportunity to promote a world free of nuclear weapons. We also welcome the statement by the Secretary-General.

In the area of nuclear disarmament and the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, Nicaragua is a party to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. Nicaragua has also ratified the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, adopted in 2017, which for the first time in history prohibits the existence, use and threat of use of nuclear weapons, including nuclear testing. The purpose of all of those instruments is the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

Moreover, Nicaragua, as a signatory of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean — the Treaty of Tlatelolco — which is a regional initiative establishing a zone free of nuclear weapons, opposes and does not accept any kind of nuclear tests or nuclear-weapon trials, as they run counter to the priority on the disarmament agenda, namely, nuclear disarmament. We reiterate that the most effective step towards achieving nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation is to halt all nuclear-weapon tests definitively and immediately.

It is unacceptable that, in our third year of implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, ever more is being spent on developing, modernizing and testing nuclear weapons, and ever less on promoting human development and well-being.

The terrible consequences of the nuclear tests carried out since 1945 on human beings and Mother Earth are clear to see, and they continue to cause suffering among populations in many parts of the world.

We support resolution 72/51, which, by consensus, established 29 August as the International Day against the Nuclear Tests. We also look forward to the prompt entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

We firmly believe that the only guarantee against the threat or use of weapons of mass destruction and

towards ensuring non-proliferation is the total and complete elimination of nuclear weapons.

Mr. Gallegos Chiriboga (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation expresses its gratitude for the convening of this commemoration of the International Day against Nuclear Tests.

Ecuador is constitutionally bound to condemn the development, production, threat of use and use of nuclear weapons. In that regard, Ecuador also condemns, as it always has, all nuclear tests, wherever, whenever and by whomsoever carried out, not only because they contribute to the development of weapons with devastating humanitarian consequences now prohibited by a legally binding instrument but also because of the damage they inflict on our planet and its environment. We must not forget the far-reaching environmental and health effects of such tests. In that regard, my delegation once again urges all countries not yet having done so to join and ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), and we commend the work of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO) tirelessly seeking to universalize the ban and establishing the network of monitoring stations of the International Monitoring System.

My country, convinced of the value of the CTBTO and in coordination with its Technical Secretariat, established two monitoring stations in the Galapagos islands, which are now an operational part of the International Monitoring System. We hope that their operations will contribute to maintaining international peace and security. They also provide additional benefits in terms of early warning against, and thus prevention of the impacts of, natural disasters.

We also condemn subcritical and computerized tests, which go against the spirit of the CTBT and contribute to the modernization of such weapons, thereby undermining the commitments undertaken by the nuclear-weapon States under article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

As part of our commitment to nuclear disarmament, Ecuador joined the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, adopted on 7 July 2017, which is a legally binding instrument establishing the total prohibition of nuclear weapons as against international law.

In conclusion, my delegation wishes to underscore the value of the CTBT and the system it establishes, not only for international peace and security but

for its benefits to the environment and in preventing the impacts of natural disasters. We believe those two instruments to be complementary and essential for achieving the objective of general and complete disarmament, and nuclear disarmament in particular.

Mr. Jaime Calderón (El Salvador) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I should like to thank the President of the General Assembly for convening this meeting to mark the International Day against Nuclear Tests. We also thank the delegation of Kazakhstan for the great effort it devoted to facilitating the adoption of resolution 72/51 in 2017 and its tireless support for the commemoration and promotion of the International Day against Nuclear Tests.

Nuclear tests do nothing but undermine international peace, security and stability, as well as putting the lives of millions of people at risk. We therefore reiterate our condemnation of any type of nuclear test, wherever and by whomsoever carried out. At the same time, we believe nuclear tests run counter to the objective and purpose of the disarmament and non-proliferation regime and to the obligations and provisions set out in the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

My delegation takes this opportunity to reiterate the important need for the prompt entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. We call on States falling under annex 2 of the Treaty to step up the process of signing and/or ratifying the Treaty without further delay. At the same time, we urge States to refrain from conducting nuclear tests of any kind, including non-explosive tests, subcritical tests, even those carried out through simulations, and any action intended to contribute to the development or improvement of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction.

My country welcomes all efforts of the international community seeking to end nuclear testing and reiterates its firm conviction that the only guarantee against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons is their prohibition and total elimination. We will therefore continue working to uphold this paradigm in all multilateral contexts. We call on the entire international community to join together in this endeavour.

We want to stress the importance implementing resolution 72/51, which calls on all Member States and relevant stakeholders to raise awareness and educate the public on the effects of nuclear-test explosions or

any other type of nuclear explosions, as well as the urgent need to bring them to an end.

Finally, we want to give special recognition to the work carried out jointly with Governments by non-governmental organizations, civil society, academic institutions, think tanks and the media in promoting the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

Mr. García Moritán (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I would like to thank the President of the General Assembly for convening this high-level meeting to mark the International Day against Nuclear Tests pursuant to resolution 72/51. I also wish to thank, in particular, the Secretary-General, as well as Mr. Lassina Zerbo and Ms. Annika Thunborg, for their statements.

The commemorative event that brings us together today is the anniversary of the closing of Polygon nuclear test site at Semipalatinsk on 29 August 1991, providing an excellent opportunity to reflect on the devastating effects of nuclear testing and the importance of achieving the comprehensive abolition thereof without preconditions of any kind.

More than 20 years have passed since the opening for signature of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). Although it is a key element of the non-proliferation system, we have not yet achieved the ratifications required for its entry into force. There can be no doubt that we should redouble our efforts in seeking and developing resources that will bring us closer to that goal, particularly in the current global context, where long-standing regional conflicts, as well as new but equally complex ones, are leading to an increasing lack of international security.

Like the rest of the international community, Argentina welcomed with hope the announcements relating to the suspension of North Korea's nuclear and missile testing programme. We trust that the dialogue initiated with South Korea and the United States will continue towards achieving more verifiable and far-reaching agreements. In particular, we believe that the signing and ratifying of the CTBT by North Korea and the prompt return of the inspectors of the International Atomic Energy Agency to the territory will represent additional gestures for the region and the international community as a whole.

The CTBT is a crucial tool for curbing the manufacture and modernization of existing nuclear

weapons and the development of new prototypes. However, until it enters into force, there is no legally binding instrument that prohibits all such tests. Although the suspension of nuclear tests adopted by the five permanent members of the Security Council aims to have a positive impact on matters concerning non-proliferation, it cannot be considered an acceptable substitute for the CTBT's entry into force. The implementation of unilateral moratoriums by nuclear-weapon States can affirm the nature of the CTBT as a peremptory norm of general international law. However, moratoriums are not enough when we already have a comprehensive treaty, a text that has proved to be a decisive force in stopping nuclear tests and has the capacity to continue the active verification and monitoring essential to ensuring an ongoing total ban.

Argentina is deeply committed to strengthening and optimizing the International Monitoring System and the International Data Centre of the CTBT. In that regard, Argentina hosts six monitoring stations within its borders and is planning to set up two others in the future. The Treaty's International Monitoring System is of the utmost importance to my country, which believes that prohibition must always be complemented by a robust verification system. Thanks to the CTBT's International Monitoring System, the chances today that any one country could carry out nuclear tests secretly, behind the international community's back, are highly unlikely. The tremendous political, legal and economic efforts that have been made must therefore culminate in the Treaty's entry into force.

The Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty will take place on 25 September. We are convinced that any measure that can lead us towards the early entry into force of that instrument will greatly contribute to the nuclear non-proliferation regime. In that regard, as it has done historically, the Republic of Argentina will continue advocating for the CTBT's speedy entry into force, while urging States that have yet to ratify it to reconsider their positions so as to contribute to building a safer world.

In conclusion, allow me to end by reaffirming the commitment of my country and the entire region to disarmament, non-proliferation and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. As a tangible contribution to international peace and security, Argentina has submitted the candidacy of Rafael Mariano Grossi for the position of Director General of the International

Atomic Energy Agency. We hope to count on the support of the international community in acceding to that post, which for the first time would fall to a Latin American, a region that has given ample proof of its commitment to the peaceful uses of the atom and has remained firmly committed to achieving a world free of nuclear weapons.

Mr. Flynn (Ireland): Ireland aligns itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union, and I thank the briefers Secretary-General Guterres, Mr. Zerbo and Ms. Thunborg for their thoughtful remarks. Ireland is pleased to join other States and civil society here today in observing the International Day against Nuclear Tests as part of the global efforts towards a nuclear-weapon-free world.

In that regard, even though it has not entered into force, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) represents an important norm. Ireland views its entry into force as critically important to strengthening the disarmament and non-proliferation architecture, built upon the foundations of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the CTBT. We further view the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons as strengthening that architecture.

Today's event provides an opportunity for us to further highlight the urgency of the immediate entry into force of the CTBT. We call on all States to sign and ratify the CTBT without delay. In particular, all remaining annex 2 States have a special responsibility to lead without waiting for other States to ratify the Treaty. Pending the entry into force, we further call for the maintenance of moratoriums and to refrain from any acts that are contrary to the purpose of the Treaty. Breaches of the global norm against nuclear testing are never acceptable.

It is indisputable that nuclear testing has extremely harmful effects on human lives, human health and our planet and serious ramifications for global peace, stability and security. We recall the victims of such testing today. Initiatives such as the International Day against Nuclear Tests are an important element in raising global awareness of the global norm against testing. The International Day further helps to draw attention to the importance of strengthening that norm as we strive for a world free of nuclear weapons.

Finally, I want to join other speakers in paying tribute to the leadership that Kazakhstan has consistently demonstrated on the issue.

Mr. Iteboje (Nigeria): Let me begin by thanking the President of the General Assembly for convening this very important plenary meeting to commemorate the International Day against Nuclear Tests. Allow me also to thank Mr. Lassina Zerbo, Executive Secretary of the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization, and his committed team for their tireless efforts in promoting the Treaty and in building up its verification regime.

Nigeria aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Uganda on behalf of the Group of African States.

My delegation would like to recall the adoption of resolution 64/35, which mandated the observance of the International Day against Nuclear Tests, and commends the laudable initiative of the delegation of Kazakhstan. The resolution seeks to promote awareness of and education on the horrendous effects of nuclear test explosions and the need for their cessation, thereby providing an additional means for the achievement of a world free of nuclear weapons.

My delegation deeply regrets the fact that 21 years after its opening for signature, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) has yet to enter into force. We therefore once again call on those that have still not signed or ratified the CTBT, especially the eight remaining States mentioned in annex 2 of the Treaty, to do so without further delay.

Having ratified the CTBT in September 2009, Nigeria is dedicated to promoting its entry into force and supports all efforts aimed at sustaining and generating further political momentum, as well as the public awareness needed for its promotion and entry into force. In that regard, we share the vision of ways to advance that goal within the context of non-proliferation and disarmament in order to facilitate the attainment of a nuclear-weapon-free world.

The continued existence of nuclear weapons remains an existential threat to all humankind. The cost of maintaining and modernizing those weapons is both outrageous and inexcusable when compared to resources allocated by States to more useful and productive ventures that could further the growth and peaceful development of societies.

Nigeria underscores its concern about the slow pace of the progress made by nuclear-weapon States in accomplishing the total elimination of their nuclear

arsenals, in accordance with their legal obligations and undertakings under article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). In that regard, we stress that the universalization of the NPT depends on strict compliance with its three pillars, namely, disarmament, non-proliferation and peaceful uses of nuclear energy. My delegation seizes this opportunity to again highlight the 1996 advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice, which affirms that the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons constitutes a crime against humanity and a violation of international law, including international humanitarian law.

Nigeria reiterates its view that the catastrophic humanitarian consequences that could result from either the deliberate use or the unintentional explosion of nuclear weapons should serve as a compelling reason for all States to address the question of their continued possession. Nuclear weapons remain the ultimate agents of mass destruction, and their total elimination should be the ultimate objective of all disarmament processes within the broad spectrum of goals being pursued by the United Nations. To that end, my delegation recalls with satisfaction the adoption of the landmark Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which opened for signature on 20 September 2017. My delegation remains proud to have participated actively in the processes leading to its adoption and to have been one of the first countries to sign it. Our commitment was guided by Nigeria's principled position on the denuclearization of the world.

In Africa, we have long acknowledged the existential threat posed to human existence by nuclear tests. It was to that end that African countries collectively adopted the Pelindaba Treaty, renouncing the acquisition of nuclear weapons for military purposes and declaring Africa to be a nuclear-weapon-free zone to serve as a shield for African territory, among other things by preventing the stationing of nuclear explosive devices on the continent and prohibiting the testing of such weapons in the entire space that constitutes the African continent.

Nigeria's priorities remain the civil and scientific benefits of the CTBT and its verification technologies. To that end, Nigeria takes stock of the progress made in the verification regime and would like to express its strong support for the Treaty and appreciation for the activities and work of the Preparatory Commission of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization, including in strengthening the

verification capabilities of the Treaty. My delegation is convinced that all avenues and means to end further nuclear testing will depend on the entry into force of the CTBT and its implementation.

In conclusion, we encourage the Executive Secretary, the Preparatory Commission and the Group of Friends of the CTBT to continue efforts aimed at overcoming the challenges and obtaining the signatures and ratifications necessary for the entry into force of the CTBT.

Ms. Bahous (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): I am pleased to deliver this statement on the occasion of the International Day against Nuclear Tests on behalf of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. This is an important event for Jordan, as well as for the international community, with a view to putting an end to nuclear tests of all kinds. In past decades, such tests were a major cause of intimidation for humankind and posed a threat to world peace and stability. They have had negative impacts on the security of the planet and have caused the destruction of the environment and every form of life on Earth.

I also reiterate Jordan's full support for the important statement delivered by the Ambassador of the Kingdom of Bahrain on behalf of the Group of Arab States. We further welcome and support the important elements contained in the statements made by the President of the General Assembly and the Secretary-General, demonstrating their full attention to the issue of the total elimination of every kind of threats posed by nuclear weapons, and call on all States to be committed to that end.

Jordan, like other States of the world, is aware of the dangers that humankind faces as a result of the existence of nuclear weapons. We therefore urge States to be fully committed to implementing the provisions of international conventions on that matter, including the strict implementation of article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). It is also important to establish mechanisms to ensure that States have totally eliminated those weapons.

The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan was nominated to chair the first session of the conference on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, scheduled to be held in November for one week at the United Nations Headquarters in New York. General Assembly decision 73/546 stipulates that the

Secretary-General must convene annual sessions of the conference until we reach a legally binding text to establish a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, through arrangements adopted voluntarily by the countries of the region. The upcoming conference should build on the relevant Middle East resolution adopted at the 1995 NPT review conference.

I thank all friendly States and regional groups that, during the general discussion, expressed their support for the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. That reflects the willingness of the majority of Member States to achieve that objective.

In conclusion, I call on all States of the Middle East to actively and constructively participate in the work of the conference in order to establish sustained peace and security in the Middle East. That will contribute to achieve prosperity and international peace and security.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the observer of the Observer State of the Holy See.

Archbishop Auza (Holy See): Today's commemoration and promotion of the International Day against Nuclear Tests is important to enhance public awareness and education about the humanitarian impact of nuclear-weapon-test explosions, with a view to creating the conditions necessary for a universal proscription of nuclear tests as a step towards achieving a nuclear-weapon-free world.

The first test of a nuclear weapon, unhappily nicknamed Trinity, took place 74 years ago in the desert of New Mexico, in the United States of America. It has been followed by more than 2,000 nuclear tests, carried out by eight States on four continents and in the Pacific Ocean area. Even before the Trinity test, the Holy See had already voiced deep concern regarding the violent use of atomic energy, and since then has unceasingly called for a ban on nuclear-weapon tests.

The Holy See has therefore ratified the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) because it strongly believes that no further nuclear explosive testing should ever take place again. My delegation therefore urges the States whose ratifications are indispensable to the entry into force of the CTBT to ratify the Treaty. Unilateral moratoriums — which, thankfully, have held firm since 1998, with the sole exception of the nuclear-weapon tests done by the

Democratic People's Republic of Korea — can never be considered an enduring substitute for a CTBT that is in force.

Moreover, the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons bans nuclear tests, mindful of the unacceptable suffering of and harm caused to the victims of the use of nuclear weapons, as well as of those affected by the testing of nuclear weapons. The Holy See, which ratified the Treaty on the very first day it was opened for signature and ratification, looks forward to the day it will enter into force, hoping that day will be sooner rather than later.

Any future nuclear testing would have extremely negative consequences, while moving us further away from our goal of a nuclear-weapon-free world. Today is an occasion for the international community to recommit to doing everything required to ensure that nuclear testing is relegated definitively to the past.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in today's commemorative meeting. The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 101.

The meeting rose at 1.20 p.m.