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First Committee

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Official Records

Chair: Mr. Llorentty Solíz (Bolivia (Plurinational State of))

*In the absence of the Chair, Mr. Horne (Australia),
Vice-Chair, took the Chair.*

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda items 89 to 105 (continued)

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

The Acting Chair: In accordance with its programme of work, the Committee will first hear from the remaining speakers on the rolling list for the “Nuclear weapons” cluster and then listen to delegations wishing to exercise their right of reply under the cluster. Time permitting, the Committee will also begin its consideration of the “Other weapons of mass destruction” cluster this afternoon.

Ms. Skerten (New Zealand): I have the honour to take the floor on behalf of the De-Alerting Group — Chile, Malaysia, Nigeria, Sweden, Switzerland and my own country, New Zealand — on the important issue of decreasing the operational readiness of nuclear-weapon systems, or de-alerting.

The De-Alerting Group was established in 2007. Since then we have consistently called on States that maintain nuclear-weapon systems on high alert to de-alert them, both as a concrete step towards nuclear disarmament and as a risk-reduction measure. We agree with the Secretary-General’s view, presented in his Agenda for Disarmament, on the urgency of risk

reduction and nuclear disarmament, and we also agree that de-alerting should be an issue on which there is a strong international consensus.

In his address to the Conference on Disarmament this year, the Secretary-General also urged for developing risk-reduction measures that would help to alleviate tensions and bring us back from the nuclear brink. The risks posed by nuclear weapons will remain as long as those weapons exist. It is well known that those risks multiply significantly when nuclear weapons are on high alert. Such risks include inadvertent launches due to technical failure or operator error, the possibility of misinterpretation of early-warning data, failures of and false reports by early-warning systems, and the use of nuclear weapons by unauthorized actors, such as rogue military units, terrorists or cyber attackers.

It is also widely acknowledged, including by former military leaders from the States with the largest nuclear arsenals, that de-alerting is of most value during times of heightened tensions — times such as now. Against that backdrop, the case for urgent action on de-alerting should be compelling. That is not just a theoretical concern, but one substantiated by the significant history of accidents and close calls, particularly on the part of those in possession of the largest nuclear arsenals. In the past few decades, both the United States and Russia have received erroneous information from early-warning sensors or have misinterpreted warning data. In every case, we have been extraordinarily fortunate that disaster was averted, but given the devastating consequences of any use of nuclear weapons, deliberate

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or accidental, it is not sufficient to have to continue to rely on good fortune.

We regret that some nuclear-weapon States have moved away from their earlier acknowledgement of the risks of having nuclear forces on high alert. Efforts to defend or promote the retention of nuclear weapons on high-alert status reflect a shift away from existing commitments. At this time of heightened international tension, stability would be best served by the fulfilment of existing obligations and commitments. At last year's session of the General Assembly, 175 States voted in favour of the De-Alerting Group's resolution on decreasing the operational readiness of nuclear-weapons systems (resolution 73/60), with a significant number of States also sponsoring it. That sent a clear message about the need to renew efforts to ensure that commitments to reduce the operational readiness of nuclear weapons on high alert are fulfilled. We intend to take this issue forward to the 2020 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons next year.

Some 12 years after the establishment of the De-Alerting Group, our message has only become more urgent. The nuclear-weapon States should immediately implement previously agreed commitments on de-alerting and take steps to rapidly reduce operational readiness, unilaterally, bilaterally or multilaterally, and ensure that all nuclear weapons are removed from high-alert status. We look forward to working together in the relevant forums to make much-needed progress on de-alerting.

Mrs. Hussain (Maldives): The total elimination of nuclear weapons is a responsibility that we should all assume if we are to advance global efforts on disarmament and non-proliferation. The grave threat posed by the continued possession of nuclear weapons, even by a few, represents an existential threat to global peace and the future of humankind. The Maldives calls on States that possess nuclear weapons to abide by non-proliferation treaties and continue dismantling their nuclear arsenals.

Today the Maldives is among the few small island developing States to have ratified the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which we did in September. Our decision to accede to the Treaty was rooted in the long-held belief that no country or people should be exposed to the threat of use of such weapons. The Maldives is a peace-loving State. We have never

produced armaments or weaponry of any type, nor do we have the desire to do so in future. We strongly believe that it is our moral duty and legal obligation under the Charter of the United Nations to work to strengthen and enforce the international disarmament and non-proliferation machinery, of which the First Committee remains a major pillar.

The Maldives is proud to be located in the Indian Ocean, which was designated a zone of peace in 1971 by the General Assembly through its adoption of resolution 2832 (XXVI). We continue to believe that it is in our best interests to maintain the Indian Ocean as a zone of peace, free of nuclear weapons or other weapons of mass destruction.

Terrorism has become one of the greatest international threats of this century. The Maldives is deeply concerned about the possible risk of non-State actors getting hold of radioactive sources that could be used in the production of nuclear weapons. We urge the international community to commit adequate resources and cooperate fully in order to prevent the theft or acquisition by terrorists of such nuclear materials. Humankind and the planet that we inhabit already face the serious threat of climate change, and we cannot afford to worry about a nuclear apocalypse as well. Multilateralism provides a framework so that we can set ourselves the goal of a world free from nuclear threats. We must now take that goal a step further and make it a reality.

Mr. Fiallo Karolys (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): In less than 10 months we will commemorate the seventy-fifth anniversary of the atomic bombings on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. As I already said during the general debate (see A/C.1/74/PC.9), I assure the First Committee that my delegation will take every opportunity to remind Member States that the best tribute we can pay to the victims of those bombings is to sign and ratify the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and ensure its swift entry into force.

We call for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons and condemn their use, the threat of their use and their mere existence, as they jeopardize the survival of humankind. No country alone, not even the most powerful, not even all countries united, could withstand or fend off the devastating consequences of a nuclear explosion, whether deliberate or accidental. In addition to representing an existential challenge, the existence of nuclear weapons is preventing the consolidation of a

democratic world order and is denying us of a culture of peace, diplomacy and a sense of preserving humankind.

As part of the first densely populated area free of nuclear weapons, Ecuador urges all States to make efforts to reinforce nuclear-weapon-free zones all over the world. I would like to highlight the meeting organized in New York on 18 October by the Permanent Missions of Austria, Kazakhstan and New Zealand, together with the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons, and with the participation of the Chair of the First Committee, at which reports on various regional workshops on this issue were presented.

We will have achieved a safer world when we are able to create the conditions necessary to convene such workshops in every single region of the world. My country believes that a change in the approach of the security doctrines of nuclear-weapon States and countries where nuclear weapons are stationed, or that are under so-called nuclear protection, is essential to a peaceful world. We also believe that it is both significant and deplorable that the more difficulties multilateralism faces, the more the narratives about nuclear threats increase. The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons integrates perfectly into the current non-proliferation and nuclear-disarmament architecture, together with the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

The full text of my statement will be available on PaperSmart, but I would like to conclude by stating that Ecuador once again expresses its total rejection of any contemplation, planning or development of nuclear tests. We reiterate our full support for the work of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization and urge the international community to join forces to achieve its entry into force as soon as possible.

The Acting Chair: I now give the floor to the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran to introduce draft resolution A/C.1/74/ L.4.

Mr. Balouji (Islamic Republic of Iran): Iran would like to associate itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/74/PV.11).

Nuclear weapons pose an existential threat to humankind. Seventy-four years after their first use, and despite the international community's collective call to the nuclear-weapon States that have failed to honour

their legal nuclear-disarmament obligations, the nuclear policies of some nuclear-weapon States have blocked progress in the process of nuclear disarmament and are a source of deep concern, since those States continue to build their nuclear arsenals.

Certain nuclear-weapon States continue to attempt to achieve nuclear superiority through a vicious circle of a nuclear arms race and a race to modernize their nuclear arms. They refuse to grant universal, legally binding security assurances to the non-nuclear-weapon States parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). One nuclear-weapon State occasionally threatens other NPT States parties with nuclear weapons and has lowered the threshold for using such weapons. Bilateral instruments designed to prevent a nuclear arms race are disintegrating one after the other, with no credible substitutes. States have prevented various Review Conferences of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons from succeeding and have shown no political will to abide by their legal obligations to start meaningful negotiations towards nuclear disarmament. Among the nuclear-weapon States, the actions of the United States, including its recent withdrawals from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty and the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, undermine international peace and security.

The Israeli regime remains the only country in the Middle East that is not party to the NPT, and the only impediment to realizing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region. With the assistance and support of the United States, this aggressive and law-breaking regime continues to build its nuclear arsenals and occasionally threatens Iran with nuclear annihilation. We firmly believe that no one should possess nuclear weapons.

That said, there are some steps that are crucial to strengthening international security. Nuclear-weapon States must fulfil their explicit legal obligations under article VI of the NPT. It is vital that the United States comply with the provisions of relevant instruments to which it is a party. Israel must join the NPT as a non-nuclear-weapon party, without preconditions or further delay. The United States must cease providing direct and indirect assistance to Israel's nuclear-weapon programme, the 2020 NPT Review Conference should take concrete decisions aimed at realizing global nuclear disarmament, and the Conference on Disarmament should start negotiations on a comprehensive convention on nuclear weapons.

In conclusion, I have the honour to introduce Iran's biennial draft resolution, "Follow-up to nuclear disarmament obligations agreed to at the 1995, 2000 and 2010 Review Conferences of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons" (A/C.1/74/L.4). The full version of my statement will be made available on PaperSmart.

Mr. Belousov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Ridding the world of the threat posed by weapons of mass destruction (WMDs), and especially nuclear weapons, is one of the top priorities of Russia's foreign policy. The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) continues to play a fundamental role in achieving that goal. We attach particular importance to the successful conclusion of the current NPT review cycle, and we are ready to collaborate actively with all partners to overcome the remaining disagreements that are preventing the NPT from being further strengthened. In that regard, we emphasize how crucial it is to implement the decisions adopted during previous review cycles.

We attach particular importance to the establishment of a zone free of WMDs in the Middle East. We believe that resolving that issue is in the interests of all countries in the region and will help to strengthen the nuclear non-proliferation regime. Russia will participate in the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction, to be held in New York from 18 to 22 November. We will do everything in our power to support its successful outcome. We see the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones as an important element of the non-proliferation regime.

The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) is a key instrument in the NPT regime. It is designed to effectively hinder the development of nuclear weapons and establish an insurmountable barrier to improving and expanding nuclear weapons. We reaffirm our commitment to the CTBT and call on States, particularly the annex 2 States, to intensify their efforts to ensure its entry into force. We call on the United States to alter its position on the Treaty and to revisit the issue of its ratification before the 2020 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

The commitment of the Russian Federation to the goal of a nuclear-weapon-free world has been consistently reflected in concrete practical actions.

We have fully implemented and strictly adhered to all of our treaty obligations under the relevant bilateral agreements. But crises have manifested themselves in the area of nuclear arms control. We have to note with deep regret once again that the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, a key disarmament agreement, was terminated following the United States withdrawal on trumped-up pretexts. As a responsible member of the international community, the Russian Federation seeks to prevent new missile crises. We have unilaterally declared and will implement a moratorium on ground-based intermediate-range missiles as long as no American missiles of that type appear in the relevant regions. We call on the United States and its allies to reciprocate with similar steps.

We note with concern the continuing lack of clarity on the part of the United States with regard to the future of the New START Treaty, which expires in less than 18 months. In the current circumstances, it would make sense to extend the agreement, which would prevent the strategic stability situation from completely deteriorating and would buy time to explore possible approaches to new emerging weapons and military technologies. Our full statement will be made available on the PaperSmart portal.

Mr. Izquierdo Ortiz de Zárate (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, Spain aligns itself with the statements made by the observer of the European Union and by the representative of the Netherlands, on behalf of a group of States (see A/C.1/74/PV.11). The full text of our statement will be available on PaperSmart.

In Spain's view, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is the cornerstone of the international non-proliferation regime and the platform from which to advance the nuclear-disarmament process and the development of nuclear-energy applications for civil purposes. We highlight the key relevance of each of the Treaty's three pillars and the need for their balanced and complementary implementation. Next year's Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons represents an opportunity and a challenge for all of us to work to bring greater substance to the Treaty and achieve the greatest possible consensus.

Disarmament efforts must be developed by involving the nuclear-weapon States so that they can fulfil their disarmament commitments in accordance with article VI of the Treaty and agree on other

transparency measures. We must continue working to create a framework of trust that allows us to achieve specific commitments. We welcome efforts in that regard such as the Stepping Stones initiative, of which we are part, and we believe it represents a good opportunity to strengthen disarmament through concrete and tangible steps.

Spain attaches great importance to the convening of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction, with the participation of all the States of the region.

Spain also supports countries that wish to develop nuclear capabilities for peaceful purposes in a responsible and transparent manner, in accordance with the NPT and in strict compliance with their international commitments in the areas of technological and physical security and non-proliferation. We highlight the central role of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) as a guarantor for verifying the Treaty in the areas of non-proliferation and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. We advocate the universalization of the IAEA safeguards regime, supplemented by the additional protocol, as the international standard for verification and transparency.

The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty is another important priority for Spain. We therefore call on States that have not yet signed or ratified the Treaty, particularly annex 2 States, to do so as soon as possible, in order to ensure its urgent entry into force.

Finally, I would like to underline the importance of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004), which is a key instrument in the current international legal framework in this area. Spain has collaborated with other countries in the fight against the proliferation of nuclear capabilities to groups and armed forces and in the prevention of nuclear terrorism, and we intend to continue working in those areas.

Mrs. Bogomilova-Rasheva (Bulgaria): Bulgaria aligns itself with the statements made by the observer of the European Union and by the representative of the Netherlands, on behalf of 29 like-minded countries (see A/C.1/74/PV.11).

Bulgaria remains firmly committed to the achievement of a world free of nuclear weapons. Nuclear disarmament should be universal, verifiable and irreversible, based on a progressive, step-by-step

approach. We are convinced that such an approach is possible only within the framework of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), in particular its article VI. Bulgaria shares the concerns about current developments in the fields of non-proliferation, disarmament and arms control. Next year will mark the fiftieth anniversary of the entry into force of the NPT, and the twenty-fifth of its extension. We need to reaffirm its relevance and validity to maintain momentum. We believe firmly that its three pillars are equally important and mutually reinforcing and contribute to international peace, security and stability. The next Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons will be a chance to once again uphold and consolidate the NPT as the key instrument in the global non-proliferation and disarmament architecture. We should spare no effort in securing the Conference's successful outcome.

We believe that the entry into force and universalization of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) are not only a political imperative but a practical building block for nuclear disarmament. More than 20 years after its opening for signature, the international community's efforts are still required for the Treaty's entry into force. Bulgaria, as an annex 2 State, is among those that have signed and ratified the Treaty. We call on all States that have not yet done so to sign and ratify the CTBT without further delay.

A fissile material cut-off treaty remains one of our top priorities in the area of nuclear disarmament. We share the view that it is essential to commence negotiations on such a treaty as soon as possible, since it is unquestionably an issue that is ripe for negotiation. We believe that, by building trust and ensuring the engagement of all, it will be possible to achieve a world without nuclear weapons. Nuclear disarmament verification and negative security assurances can serve as important confidence-building measures, strengthening the nuclear non-proliferation regime, contributing to nuclear disarmament and enhancing regional and global security, in line with the goals and objectives of the NPT.

Mr. Masuku (Eswatini): The Kingdom of Eswatini aligns itself with the statements made by the representatives of Indonesia, on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/74/PV.11), and Zambia, on behalf of the Group of African States (see

A/C.1/74/PV.12). We would like to add the following remarks in our national capacity.

The Kingdom of Eswatini reiterates its earlier urgent call for our planet and outer space to be freed from nuclear weapons, as their presence constitutes an existential threat to global peace and the future survival of humankind. Eswatini supports the principle of complete nuclear disarmament as a key prerequisite for maintaining international peace and security. It was in that spirit that Eswatini welcomed the adoption of the landmark Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, on 7 July 2017. We stress that the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons will not undermine the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), but will rather complement and strengthen the nuclear non-proliferation regime, with the NPT as its foundation. We hope that all members of the international community, including the nuclear-weapon States and those under the so-called nuclear umbrella, will seize the opportunity to pursue the call of a nuclear-free world.

The Kingdom's highest priority remains clear. It is the achievement of nuclear disarmament and the total elimination of nuclear weapons, which is the overall objective of the NPT. Eswatini further notes its deep concern about the slow progress by the 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 NPT. Eswatini therefore insists on the implementation of all agreed measures and undertakings by the nuclear-weapon States in the context of the Treaty.

As Africa and the whole world celebrate the tenth anniversary of the Treaty of Pelindaba, Eswatini reiterates its commitment to the Treaty, which reaffirms Africa's status as a nuclear-weapon-free zone and acts as a shield for African territory, including by preventing the stationing of nuclear-explosive devices on the continent and prohibiting any testing of those weapons in the entire space that constitutes the African continent.

Eswatini would like to emphasize the humanitarian considerations in the context of all deliberations on nuclear weapons, particularly its serious concern about the catastrophic humanitarian consequences that would result from the accidental or deliberate use or detonation of nuclear weapons. We call on all States, particularly nuclear-weapon States, to take into consideration the

consequences of the use of those weapons for human health, the environment and vital economic resources, among other things, and to take the measures necessary to dismantle and renounce them.

Mr. Mizati (Malawi): The Malawi delegation aligns itself with the statements made by the representatives of Indonesia, on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/74/PV.11), and Zambia, on behalf of the Group of African States (see A/C.1/74/PV.12).

It is a fact that there are close to 15,000 dangerous nuclear weapons in the world, and Malawi is aware of the scale of devastation that those weapons cause to the world as a whole, and especially to humankind. That is why Malawi condemns the use of nuclear weapons anywhere in the world. We support all nuclear disarmament initiatives and treaties, such as the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, of 1 July 1968, the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, of 7 July 2017, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, of 24 September 1996, and the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty, also known as the Treaty of Pelindaba, of 11 April 1996.

Malawi therefore urges all Member States to stop paying lip service to the United Nations on important matters of nuclear disarmament. With concerted efforts, the United Nations can achieve its mandate of maintaining international peace and security, as enshrined in Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations.

In conclusion, Malawi encourages Member States to use multilateral diplomacy to negotiate and implement those treaties and initiatives in order to enable the United Nations to achieve its disarmament agenda.

Ms. Quintero Correa (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): Colombia advocates for general and complete disarmament. My country reaffirms its commitment to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and its three key pillars, disarmament, non-proliferation and the promotion of the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, science and technology. I would also like to highlight the contribution that its peaceful uses have made in areas related to development.

The next Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons will be held in 2020. Colombia calls on all States — nuclear and non-nuclear States alike — to work together to universalize the Treaty, which remains the cornerstone

of disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation, and to overcome any political factors that might affect deliberations.

As a State party to the Treaty of Tlatelolco, which created the first densely populated area free of nuclear weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean, Colombia supports initiatives aimed at creating other, similar areas as a way of contributing to international peace and security. We also want to highlight Security Council resolution 1540 (2004), which is a valuable United Nations instrument that complements the multilateral disarmament and non-proliferation architecture.

My country is firmly committed to multilateralism and believes that multilateral forums are the appropriate venues for effectively addressing highly relevant issues, such as disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation, and for reaching consensus that can enable us to address the challenge of our shared desire for a world free of nuclear weapons. In that regard, it is important to promote synergies and complementary processes among the various existing instruments and new initiatives that have been developed within the international community, while taking into account the fact that all such tools were created to adopt measures that can free the world of the threat posed to humankind by the possession and use of nuclear weapons.

While achieving the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons is a shared, common and collective responsibility, States have different roles and functions in that regard. Non-nuclear States play a role in promoting nuclear disarmament, while the nuclear-weapon States have a special responsibility in ensuring effective nuclear disarmament. As Secretary-General António Guterres noted in his Agenda for Disarmament, the total elimination of nuclear weapons can be attained only through a revitalized and serious dialogue that reflects a common vision leading towards nuclear disarmament. Nuclear disarmament is a tool for preserving peace and maintaining stability in times of turbulence, and Colombia shares that vision. We call for a reinvigorated dialogue and for States to work to build the necessary consensus while guided by our common objective, responsibility and moral imperative of freeing humankind from the threat that the very existence of nuclear weapons represents.

Ms. Sehayek-Soroka (Israel): Israel consistently conducts itself responsibly and maintains a policy of restraint in the nuclear domain, with specific emphasis

on the goals and principles of the non-proliferation regime. In that regard, we are committed to various nuclear safety and security mechanisms, as our full statement, to be made available on PaperSmart, elaborates.

Israel voted against the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. We would like to emphasize our long-held view that the Treaty does not create, contribute to the development of or indicate the existence of customary international law related to the subject or content of the Treaty.

While Israel values the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and recognizes its contribution to the non-proliferation regime, it is only as effective as the level of compliance of its members, as with any other arms-control instrument. It is therefore very unfortunate that the NPT is inadequate to fully addressing States' deliberate advancement of clandestine military nuclear programmes, especially in the Middle East. As a result of a culture of non-compliance among some countries in the Middle East with regard to respect for binding obligations, and the willingness of certain States in the international community to ignore that delinquent behaviour, the arms-control architecture does not provide sufficient solutions for the security needs of a number of countries in the Middle East. Iran remains the most significant threat to the Middle East and beyond. When Iran's violations were ultimately discovered, the NPT lacked the tools to recognize and address them appropriately and in a timely manner. Syria, too, remains an open file with its violations and non-compliance with the NPT, since the Al-Assad regime has also refused to provide answers on its nuclear programme to the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Finally, draft resolution A/C.1/74/L.2, entitled "The risk of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East", which is submitted yearly to the First Committee, is clearly aimed at potentially demonizing the State of Israel and singling it out with false accusations, as if Israel were the problem in the region with regard to nuclear proliferation. That misleading and distorted draft resolution ignores the real proliferators in the region, and by doing so gives them the legitimacy to continue their illicit activities. The expected Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction goes against the principles and guidelines of the United

Nations Disarmament Commission that were agreed by consensus in 1999. Israel will not cooperate with counterproductive initiatives of that kind and will not participate in the Conference in November.

A full version of my statement will be uploaded to PaperSmart.

Mr. Hallak (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): My delegation aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/74/PV.11).

The Syrian Arab Republic was one of the first States to accede to and ratify the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), in 1968, in a decision based on our belief that the possession of nuclear weapons by any State, especially in our region, constitutes a threat and is likely to destabilize international and regional peace and security. My country was also among the first to call for the establishment of a zone in the Middle East free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction. During our membership in the Security Council in 2003, we submitted a draft resolution on ridding the region of such weapons. However, that initiative was opposed by the United States delegation, which threatened to veto it, in an attempt to protect Israel and evade its international obligations.

My country believes that the NPT is a fundamental pillar of the regime governing nuclear non-proliferation, disarmament and the peaceful uses of atomic energy. In that regard, we stress our commitment to our international obligations under the Treaty. As we approach the Treaty's fiftieth anniversary, we believe that the upcoming Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons should confront some nuclear States parties' grave breaches of the Treaty.

The 1995 resolution on the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East was an integral part of the indefinite extension of the NPT. Syria looks forward to seeing the international community undertake effective and practical measures to ensure that the Middle East becomes a zone free of nuclear weapons.

In that regard, we emphasize that, if we are to establish a zone in the Middle East free of nuclear weapons and avert the threat of the proliferation of such weapons, the Israeli entity must accede to the NPT as

a non-nuclear-weapon party and subject all its nuclear facilities and activities to the International Atomic Energy Agency's safeguards regime.

The challenges confronting the NPT are significant, including the United States non-compliance with its article I, by ensuring the proliferation of nuclear weapons on the territories of five NATO countries and in the territorial waters of many others, especially in the Mediterranean.

Some delegations have referred to the Creating an Environment for Nuclear Disarmament initiative. The initiative was actually first referred to as "Creating Conditions for Nuclear Disarmament". Its real goal is not to achieve global nuclear disarmament, but rather procrastination and the avoidance of genuine results leading to nuclear disarmament.

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

Archbishop Auza (Holy See): We live in tumultuous times. Perhaps nowhere are threats graver than in the field of nuclear disarmament. Treaties are abrogated and flouted, the architecture of arms control is increasingly weakened, the nuclear arms race has been renewed and technological innovations threaten to make international monitoring dauntingly difficult. That train of events flies in the face of the responsibility that Member States, and especially the nuclear Powers, have under the Charter of the United Nations to take effective collective measures to prevent and remove threats to peace.

The world has become increasingly aware of the humanitarian consequences and planetary perils of the deployment of nuclear weapons in warfare. Greater attention must be given to the unnecessary suffering that the use of nuclear weapons would create. If such suffering is banned in the waging of conventional war, it should be banned all the more in nuclear conflict. Member States should spare no effort in reversing the current downward spiral of arms-control and disarmament policies and dedicate themselves to formulating new mechanisms for arms reduction, leading to the elimination of nuclear weapons and general and complete disarmament, so that the human family can enjoy the fruits of peace.

When the Cuban missile crisis was still a fresh memory, Saint Pope John XXIII wrote,

“In this age which boasts of its atomic power, it no longer makes sense to maintain that war is a fit instrument with which to repair the violation of justice”.

It was in that conviction that the Holy See ratified the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and, more recently, the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. The Holy See firmly believes that those Treaties are vital pieces of the nuclear disarmament architecture and complement one another in the quest to achieve a world without nuclear weapons. If we are to realize the full promise of those instruments, we must work tirelessly to restore dialogue and fight the trust deficits that unfortunately characterize the current situation of disarmament and the building of our common and collective security.

The tenth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, to be held in 2020, which will mark the fiftieth anniversary of the entry into force of the NPT, will be a very important occasion for restoring dialogue and rebuilding mutual trust between nuclear-weapon States and among nuclear- and non-nuclear-weapon States. The Holy See looks forward to making a contribution at the Review Conference, which must motivate us to strengthen dialogue and rebuild trust, because there is no other path available to guarantee our common collective security and lasting peace.

The Acting Chair: We have heard the last speaker in the “Nuclear weapons” cluster.

I shall now call on those representatives who wish to speak in exercise of the right of reply. In that connection, I would like to remind all delegations that statements are limited to five minutes for the first intervention and three minutes for the second.

Mr. Belousov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Yesterday and today we again heard insinuations about the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty and accusations blaming Russia for the collapse of that instrument, so important to European and international security. I want to say once again, in full responsibility, that those accusations are absurd and unfounded. I would like to point out that it was Russia that made every possible political and diplomatic effort to resolve the concerns that arose with regard to the implementation of obligations under the Treaty. It is not our fault that the United States

ignored all our attempts. Now that the United States has withdrawn from the Treaty, the reasons for that position are obvious. The United States dismantled the Treaty so that it could green-light its unfettered expansion of its nuclear-missile potential.

I also want to point out that it was Russia that repeatedly warned about the pernicious consequences of ending the INF Treaty and appealed to the international community to support its efforts to preserve it. Moreover, Russia went to unprecedented lengths to show transparency by demonstrating the missiles that were the source of the United States claims. We gave foreign military specialists information on the technical characteristics of the missiles, which were never tested for distances prohibited under the INF Treaty. Unfortunately, our chief opponents ignored the demonstration and the briefing on it. In addition, all of our concerns regarding the United States clear breaches of the Treaty have gone unanswered.

So what is Russia accused of? The States making unfounded claims about us say that Russia is to blame for the INF Treaty’s breakdown, whereas they are in fact trying to make us answer for their own political deafness and short-sightedness, and for the fact that when they should have spoken up, they preferred to remain in cowardly silence and hide behind excuses about process. They are trying to blame us for the fact that many States, especially States in Europe, chose transatlantic solidarity over European and international security issues. Russia cannot take responsibility for that, and is not about to. The only people to blame for the breakdown of the INF Treaty are the United States and the countries that for reasons we do not understand became participants in this tragic event.

I also want to add that the United States described itself today as a champion in the fight against non-proliferation (see A/C.1/74/PV.12), but I would like to point out that it is the United States that is conducting so-called nuclear-sharing missions, in which it collaborates with non-nuclear NATO members to train foreign military personnel on issues related to the use, maintenance and deployment of nuclear weapons. That is a direct violation of articles I and II of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. I would like to say that the United States is a champion in promoting the proliferation of nuclear weapons, and that is an indisputable fact.

Mr. Jang Il Hun (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): It is well known that our position on nuclear deterrence as a self-defensive measure is our only option. If the root causes of the nuclear problem were eliminated, we would no longer need to possess nukes. As has been stated on several occasions, in order to settle the nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula, the United States should abandon its current strategy and approach us with a new one. We will be patient and wait for that courageous decision until the end of this year, as we have already stated. The fate of the dialogue between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States depends on the United States attitude. The United States should also take substantive steps to completely and irreversibly end its hostile policy towards the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, which threatens our country's security and infringes on our people's right merely to exist, let alone thrive.

My delegation denounces the statements made by the representatives of some Western countries, including France and Portugal, among others (see A/C.1/74/PV.12). Picking holes in our just self-defensive measures is not acceptable, and we totally reject such rhetoric. Their contradictory allegations promote double standards and do not hold water. If NATO members stand for a world without nuclear weapons, why are they opposed to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons? If they are truly interested in the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula, they must strive to eliminate the underlying reasons for our possession of nuclear weapons as a deterrent. A nuclear-weapon-free world is not an issue confined to the Korean peninsula. The principles of equality and impartiality should apply to all countries and regions. In that regard, I can only ask if those countries are willing and have the courage necessary to denuclearize Europe.

We are not yearning for the lifting of the sanctions on us, whose consequences will come home to roost, incidentally. The pain inflicted by hostile forces on our people has turned to strong indignation. We will open up the road to development and prosperity on our own, thanks to our self-reliance. Good and bad acts are measured in the short term, but it takes time to assess right and wrong. We must therefore look ahead before criticizing others when it comes to the nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula.

Mr. Li Song (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): In his statement this morning, the United States representative once again linked ideology to disarmament (see

A/C.1/74/PV.12). He claimed that the United States is exercising self-restraint, while China and other countries are devoting all of their energy to developing arms that threaten the security of other States. That is an utter distortion of the facts. The series of anachronistic statements by the United States during this session of the First Committee will get no support among the wider membership of the United Nations.

In recent years, driven by its fixated, Cold War mentality, the United States has been stirring up trouble in the Asia-Pacific region and other parts of the world. It has pursued an aggressive nuclear doctrine, used other countries as an excuse to break free from the constraints of international treaties, gone all-out in deploying and developing nuclear weapons and vigorously advanced its anti-missile system and rhetoric of supremacy in outer space, behaviour that has gravely undermined strategic balance and stability globally.

In the First Committee's deliberations so far I have yet to hear a country endorse or echo the so-called nexus between democracy and disarmament. The United States is proposing utter nonsense, full of ideological biases. Most countries have spoken candidly, expressing strong regret and grave concerns about the termination of the Intermediate Nuclear-Forces Treaty, the United States withdrawal from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action and its lowering of the threshold for using nuclear weapons, as well as its backtracking in other areas, which have grave implications for international arms-control, disarmament and non-proliferation mechanisms.

Many countries have called firmly for an extension of the New START Treaty and hope to see the bilateral nuclear-disarmament process between the United States and Russia maintained, continued and developed. That is what the international community wants. Many countries have called for the nuclear-weapon States to reiterate that a nuclear war cannot be won and must not be fought. China is also actively advocating for that as one of the five permanent members of the Security Council. However, no officials from Donald Trump's United States Administration have so far seemed willing to stick their necks out and explicitly reiterate President Reagan's famous remark of more than 30 years ago, when he said that the United States faced a moment of serious reckoning before the world. As for the accusations that the United States made about China, I want to emphasize that China's nuclear arsenal is nowhere near the size of those belonging to the United

States and Russia. Until the United States reduces its nuclear arsenal to match ours, any comments or criticism from it regarding Chinese military capabilities are hypocritical and ring hollow.

Secondly, any deployment of relevant missile installations by China inside China is based on our policy of defence and intended purely to assist in maintaining Chinese sovereignty, security and territorial integrity. That does not constitute a threat to any country unless it intends to violate China's sovereignty, security or territorial integrity.

Thirdly, China is not the United States, nor will China become the United States, nor will it adhere to the nuclear doctrine of the United States. I call on the United States to cease projecting its beliefs onto others, making, creating or conjuring up enemies, and continuing its strategies and planning to maintain global hegemony and absolute security on such pretexts.

The Cold War was history long ago. If any State attempts to turn the Cold War into a new international-security reality, it will definitely run into universal resistance and firm opposition from the international community. I want to reiterate that China is an important positive force for the promotion of international security, the maintenance of world peace and the advancement of international arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation. China will remain committed to peaceful development and will actively put multilateralism into practice and inject dynamism into its international arms-control and disarmament processes, thereby contributing to the advancement of the noble cause of peace and security for humankind.

Mr. Al Habib (Islamic Republic of Iran): I have taken the floor to exercise my delegation's right of reply in response to the statement by the representative of Saudi Arabia (A/C.1/74/PV.12), who called on the international community to work towards a comprehensive international agreement preventing Iran from possessing nuclear weapons. I suggest that the representative of Saudi Arabia refrain from wasting his time and energy in proposing rehashed, uncreative ideas and proposals that are actually copies of existing initiatives that are already in operation.

I would like to ask him to study Security Council resolution 2231 (2015), which endorsed the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). It is a comprehensive international agreement, backed by the Security Council, that is intended to reassure and

build confidence in countries such as Saudi Arabia that have had misgivings about the peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear programme. The resolution calls on Saudi Arabia and other countries to refrain from any action that might undermine the implementation of the JCPOA. Unfortunately, through its adoption of narrow-minded policies and collaboration with the infamous Israeli regime, Saudi Arabia has done everything it can to undermine the implementation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. I therefore urge Saudi Arabia, at least on this occasion, to abandon that approach and its biased and prejudiced views of Iran's nuclear programme and to pay attention to the facts, the Iranian Government's official statements and the international commitments that Iran has made with regard to nuclear non-proliferation.

Iran is committed to nuclear non-proliferation and has no ambitions to possess nuclear weapons. All high-level Iranian officials have gone on record as categorically renouncing and rejecting the option of nuclear weapons. We have adopted the Additional Protocol of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and, according to the IAEA's Director General, we have the most comprehensive and robust verification regime of any country in the world.

However, what I would like to know is whether Saudi Arabian officials are ready to categorically and unequivocally renounce the nuclear-weapon option. The Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia has gone on record as saying that Saudi Arabia will pursue the goal of nuclear weapons. If that happens, that equivocal and ambiguous commitment is a matter of serious concern. Saudi Arabia is implementing an ambitious plan to create a nuclear programme for peaceful purposes, but at the same time is not ready to abide by the comprehensive safeguards agreement and has exempted itself from IAEA verification, inspections and declarations. It is not even ready to accept the IAEA's additional protocol. That is very alarming. Saudi Arabia should be realistic and try to at least attain the level of international commitment undertaken by Iran.

Mr. Wood (United States of America): I take the floor to exercise my right of reply.

First and foremost, with regard to the comments made earlier by the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, I think that most countries in this room understand the situation quite clearly and know the efforts that the United States has made to try

to resolve the issue on the Korean peninsula. Frankly, all I would say is that as I said earlier last week, President Trump has held out the prospect of a brighter future for the Democratic People's Republic of Korea if it makes the strategic decision to denuclearize. We therefore again call on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to come back to the negotiating table in order to move forward on Chairman Kim's commitment to denuclearization made at the 2018 Singapore summit.

With regard to the remarks made earlier by the representative of Cuba concerning the United States Nuclear Posture Review (A/C.1/74/PV.12), our Nuclear Posture Review does not in any way indicate that the United States is lowering the threshold for nuclear use through the development of a low-yield weapon. On the contrary, it is raising the threshold, by signalling to countries that may try to use a low-yield device as a way to escalate and then de-escalate a conflict that their efforts to intimidate and threaten the United States and its allies will not succeed.

With regard to the comments made earlier by the representative of China, he claimed that the United States is to blame for the so-called decline in the security environment. On the contrary, it is China's aggressive and non-transparent military and nuclear activities that are a major threat to strategic security. That is why the United States and others call on China to join a trilateral arms-control negotiation with the United States and Russia. To be very frank, we will no longer allow China to get away with its pronouncements that all of its activities are peaceful and that it poses no threat in the South China Sea. We will no longer allow China to continue to claim that it is peaceful when in fact a number of its activities represent very serious threats to international peace and security.

With regard to the comments made earlier by our Russian colleague, he talked about the so-called exhibition of the SSC-8 ground-launched cruise missile. The problem with that demonstration is that it did not deal with the question that is at the heart of the problem, which is, the range of that missile. He also advocated for a moratorium on missiles that were covered under the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty. I should remind everyone that Russia has deployed several battalions of the SSC-8 ground-launched cruise missile, while the United States has no similar system in Europe. So we have been given to understand that under Russia's proposal it would continue to deploy several battalions and the United

States would deploy none. I can assure the Committee that this moratorium proposal is not something that the United States could sign up to.

Lastly, the United States was accused by Syria of being in violation of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). Again, it is in fact Syria that is in violation of the NPT through its construction of a clandestine plutonium nuclear reactor in Deir ez-Zor. That shows very clearly that Syria is in violation of the NPT. I would also recommend that the Syrian representative read the negotiating history of the NPT. It is very clear from his comments that he has not.

Mr. Almutairi (Saudi Arabia) (*spoke in Arabic*): My country would like to exercise its right of reply regarding the false allegations made against it by the representative of Iran.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia supported the Iranian nuclear agreement, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, believing that it would have a very positive effect on regional security and stability. However, we eventually realized that the Iranian regime had benefited from the economic side of the agreement while continuing to undermine regional stability and security by supplying weapons to terrorist militias, including the Houthi terrorist militias in Yemen. A great many ballistic missiles have been fired at my country as a result, in a clear threat to international peace and security as well as a violation of Security Council resolution 2231 (2015), on the Iranian nuclear agreement, which was mentioned by the representative of Iran. The resolution banned the Iranian regime from exporting or transferring ballistic missiles to terrorist groups in the region.

The Iranian regime must therefore cease its false accusations and habitual hypocrisy. In our statement (see A/C.1/74/PV.12) we called for a comprehensive international agreement, and I believe that everyone supports such an agreement, regardless of whether the Iranian regime agrees or not. We have previously pointed out various inconsistencies in the Iranian nuclear agreement, and we supported its review and the withdrawal of the United States from it, as well as efforts to conclude an international comprehensive agreement. As for the other accusations by the Iranian representative, I deny them altogether.

Ms. Sánchez Rodríguez (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): I take the floor to exercise my right of reply regarding the statement by the representative of the United States

(see A/C.1/74/PV.12), which we firmly reject. It is unfortunate that he denies and, even worse, disregards his own nuclear-security policies and doctrines in this respected forum. Serious concern has been expressed by 120 Member States about the United States Nuclear Posture Review. We reiterate that those concerns are shared by 120 Member States, including Cuba. Sources in the United States, and its own media, explicitly acknowledge that the United States Nuclear Posture Review reduces the threshold for considering the use of nuclear weapons, including in response to so-called non-nuclear strategic threats.

It is also very unfortunate that the United States has announced that it will not ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. The Cuban delegation is not trying to dissuade any delegation or to intimidate allies of the United States. It is the United States that has the primary responsibility and is the main party in non-compliance with the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the results of the Review Conferences of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. It is the United States that disregards multilateralism, and it is the United States that has withdrawn from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty and from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action on the Iranian nuclear programme.

Mr. Hallak (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): As is customary, when the Israeli position is fragile or weak, the representatives of the Israeli entity seek to spread misinformation and distort the facts, and they fail to answer for the crimes and aggression it has committed. All the relevant reports, studies and research confirm that the Israeli protectorate is the only one in the Middle East that possesses nuclear, chemical and biological arsenals.

The Israeli representative's statement lacked even basic standards. We were once again shocked by its hypocrisy and lies in its accusations about other countries. We all know that such accusations are designed to distract attention from the dangers of Israel's nuclear weapons and the failure of the Israeli entity to abide by the relevant international resolutions, including those of the Security Council, which call on it to join the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and place all of its nuclear facilities and activities under the supervision of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). The question that we should be asking Israel is this. Why has it refused to

respond to or cooperate with the IAEA with regard to the type of ammunition that it used in its aggression against my country, Syria, in 2007? The Israeli entity does not merely possess nuclear weapons. More than once it has threatened to use such weapons, including during the war of liberation in October 1973.

With regard to the statement by the representative of the United States (see A/C.1/74/PV.12), I ask him once again to read the NPT, while indicating to us which articles and paragraphs clearly state that the United States may violate the Treaty and proliferate its nuclear weapons to non-nuclear States. The NPT is clear in that regard. As outlined in an article published recently in *Foreign Policy*, 40 years ago, in 1979, the United States Administration covered up an Israeli nuclear explosion in the South Pacific Ocean, in a demonstration of the involvement of successive United States Administrations in proliferating nuclear weapons across the world. The representatives of the United States are therefore not in a position to make accusations about other countries. Unfortunately, the United States Administration is undermining international conventions and treaties, especially those relating to arms control and nuclear disarmament. I say to the representative of the United States that his country should not have pressured the IAEA into avoiding the implementation of the cooperation agreement with Syria. Everyone knows that the IAEA signed such an agreement with my country but that pressure from the United States prevented the IAEA from implementing it.

Mr. Jang Il Hun (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): In response to the statement made by the representative of the United States, I want to remind him of the statement by the spokesperson of the Foreign Ministry of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's Foreign Ministry following the Stockholm working-level talks. He said that we had no intention of repeating those sickening negotiations until the United States took significant steps to completely and irreversibly cease its hostile policy towards the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. In fact, we responded to the United States persistent requests for negotiations, as it indicated that it was ready for a dialogue based on new methods and creative solutions. However, it was not prepared for those negotiations and simply repeated its previous position. That is why we have asked the United States to come up with a new way to solve the problem.

Mr. Li Song (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The representative of the United States just talked about what he termed trilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations. We have made our position on this issue clear on multiple occasions. China will not participate in the so-called China-United States-Russia trilateral negotiations. We believe that the United States representative said that because his country wants to be released from the restrictions of international disarmament treaties so that it can freely develop its own nuclear weapons. As a State party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, we will honour our obligations under the Treaty. We have made our nuclear-disarmament policy clear on multiple occasions. The truth speaks for itself and people will make a fair judgment of it. I therefore strongly advise the United States Ambassador not to project himself onto others.

With regard to what the representative of the United States said about possible Chinese threats to regional peace and stability, especially in the South China Sea, I also feel compelled to briefly talk about China's actions in the South China Sea. China has always been committed to the peace, stability, security and development of the South China Sea region. In August, China and the countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) completed their first review of the single text to negotiate the joint code of conduct for the South China Sea — a step that represents China's commitment to working with ASEAN countries in upholding the peace and development of the region.

We have been carrying out peaceful construction activities on our own territory in the South China Sea region, and we have deployed necessary national defence facilities there. That is the inalienable right of a sovereign country. In contrast, the United States has rattled sabres in the region, travelling long distances to send its advanced ships into the South China Sea, in a swaggering display of military muscle. It is the United States that acts as the biggest driving force behind the militarization of the South China Sea. Regarding this issue, we have heard our friends in ASEAN say that they too want to see a stable South China Sea region and that forces outside the region should not create trouble under any pretext. Intervention by any third party would destabilize the region, thereby jeopardizing the efforts of China and ASEAN countries to maintain its stability and security.

Mr. Al Habib (Islamic Republic of Iran): It seems that what I said about Saudi Arabia's position and

biased and hostile approach to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) offended and annoyed our colleague from the Saudi delegation. But which should the international community believe — Saudi Arabia's statements or its actions? Even the Saudi representative's statement was self-contradictory. He said that the country supported the JCPOA, but that the agreement has many inconsistencies. Iran does this, Iran does that in the region. Iran is responsible for everything that is happening in the region, including the ongoing bombing of innocent Yemeni civilians and the military aggression against Yemen. So which should the international community believe — Saudi Arabia's actions or its statements? With its military aggression, Saudi Arabia has created an unprecedented humanitarian disaster in Yemen. Before it is too late, the country should wake up and realize that it should organize a face-saving exit from the catastrophe it has created. Saudi Arabia should also categorically and unequivocally renounce its pursuit of a nuclear option.

Mr. Wood (United States of America): I apologize for taking the floor once again, but I should respond to a couple of things that were said, one by the Syrian representative and the other by the Ambassador of China.

With regard to the Syrian representative, let me say very briefly that he continually comes here and makes ridiculous charges, while offering absolutely no substance to back up any of his lies. That is all I need to say about his and his Government's views.

With regard to the statement by the representative of China, as I said earlier, the United States is no longer going to allow China to claim in multilateral forums to be a peace-loving nation when its actions, threats and bullying indicate otherwise. He accused the United States of being a bully in the South China Sea. That is not how China's neighbours view the United States in that part of the world. It is China that they view as a bully. As I said, for quite some time China has got away with claiming peaceful intentions, while its activities and behaviour indicate the opposite. We will continue to expose China's policies, and we will again encourage China to come to the trilateral negotiating table, because its activities, and its potential doubling of its nuclear force over the next 10 years, pose a threat to international peace and security. We need to address some of those outstanding arms-control issues, which are becoming more serious with every passing day.

Mr. Almutairi (Saudi Arabia) (*spoke in Arabic*): My country is exercising its right of reply for the second time in response to some unfounded and false accusations. It is ironic that the representative of the Iranian regime is giving us lessons on security and stability in the region while his country is part of the problem rather than the solution. Iran is at the heart of every problem and conflict in the region. It supports terrorist groups, interferes in the affairs of Arab States and attempts to spread chaos and unrest in them.

I also feel compelled to respond to what the representative of the Iranian regime said about Yemen. We would have hoped that Iran could provide a small portion of the support that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has provided to Yemen at the humanitarian and social levels. We would have hoped that they would support the legitimate Government for which we intervened. If it were not for Iran's support of terrorist militias, the situation in Yemen would have been much easier to address. We would have also witnessed prosperity, development and a booming economy there. What has Iran given all the Arab States? It has given them ruin, destruction and strife. The representative of Iran should therefore ensure that his country's words match its actions and refrain from giving advice and making accusations. Saudi Arabia is a responsible State that respects international charters and treaties and is not afraid of shouldering due responsibility in every case.

Mr. Hallak (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): The people who lie, spread false propaganda, twist facts and promote fabrications are the representatives of the United States Administration.

We talk about facts. Everything I mentioned in my first right of reply was based on facts. However, as we have become accustomed to in every international forum, the representatives of the United States seek to promote lies, fallacies and hypocrisy, as I have already mentioned many times, and as many people after me will also mention. The United States spreads lies, the smallest of which was the claim that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction that led to its invasion and destruction. That was a small lie in 2003 by the representatives of the United States. However, their former Secretary of State Colin Powell had the audacity to say on television that he had been deceived on this issue, but only after Iraq was destroyed. The outcome is more than 1 million widows in Iraq and countless number of terrorist organizations that have spread in our region. All of that is the result of lies and

fallacies promoted by United States Administrations through their representatives. The hypocrisy of the United States about its nuclear policy is evident to everyone. It violates all the provisions of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, in addition, of course, to protecting Israel, which refuses to comply with international resolutions and possesses nuclear weapons.

The Acting Chair: We have exhausted the list of requests to speak in right of reply.

I give the floor to the representative of the Russian Federation on a point of order.

Mr. Belousov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I apologize for taking the floor. I would like to speak on a point of order, and it is not about the visa problem.

I have a constructive proposal. Our thematic debates on the first cluster have shown that three minutes is really not enough time for making national statements. I would therefore suggest that for the next cluster we allocate five minutes for national statements and seven for group statements. If we run out of time later, we can revisit the possibility of reducing the time limit.

The Acting Chair: I call on the representative of the United States.

Mr. Wood (United States of America): I apologize for taking the floor. With regard to the proposal just put forward by the representative of the Russian Federation, I would suggest one of two things. Either we stick to the three-minute format or we move to the five-minute format, but I think that going back and forth will be a bit problematic for a number of delegations. My proposal would therefore simply be to keep the three-minute format or, as the Russian representative suggested, move to a five-minute format, but let us keep it consistent.

The Acting Chair: I thank the Russian Federation for the proposal and for the continuing effort to help us move our work forward constructively. Recalling the decision that the Committee took yesterday (see A/C.1/74/PV.11), the Committee decided, as an exceptional measure and without setting any precedent, to limit statements in the thematic discussions to three minutes when speaking in a national capacity and five minutes for group statements. I expect that most delegations will be keen to continue with yesterday's decision. During my time in this room, I have observed

that most delegations, while sometimes putting a strain on the interpreters, have managed to keep within the limits that the Committee agreed on. However, we are of course in the Committee's hands if it wants to alter that decision. I do understand the desire to keep things consistent and predictable in order to make things simpler for all.

I call on the representative of the Russian Federation.

Mr. Belousov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): When we discussed continuing the work of the First Committee and the need to begin the thematic discussions, all representatives who spoke emphasized the fact that these debates are important to them. I just think that three minutes is not enough time for delivering national statements. Of course, the decision is in the hands of the Committee, and if my proposal is not supported, I will have to agree with that decision. As for consistency, I fully agree with my American colleague in that respect.

The Acting Chair: In terms of moving forward, the Russian Federation's proposal was to revisit yesterday's decision on time limits for the thematic debate. I am not sensing a particular desire to revisit that decision. I imagine that, as I just said, the Committee would have a strong preference for maintaining a degree of consistency. We of course thank all delegations for the efforts that they are making to stay within the revised time limits that we have set without precedent for future sessions. Unless there are any specific alternative ways forward, I would therefore propose that we maintain the path that we agreed yesterday and move to the next cluster, applying the time limit that we adopted. We will continue along those lines, but I again thank those who are looking to help us make sure that we finish our work promptly.

The Committee will now take up the cluster "Other weapons of mass destruction". We have a long list of speakers for this cluster, and I therefore appeal for the full cooperation of all representatives in respecting those time limits. We again express our appreciation for the efforts that have been made in that regard so far.

Mr. Situmorang (Indonesia): I am honoured to speak on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (NAM).

NAM States parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) are pleased with the effective operation of the CWC as the only comprehensive

multilateral treaty banning an entire category of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs), providing a verification system and promoting the use of chemicals for peaceful purposes. We urge the United States, as the only remaining State party to the CWC in possession of such weapons, to take every measure necessary to ensure its compliance as soon as possible with its detailed plan on the destruction of the chemical weapons remaining after its final extended destruction deadline of 29 April 2012, in order to uphold the credibility and integrity of the Convention.

We deeply regret the failure to adopt the report of the fourth special session of the Conference of the States Parties to Review the Operation of the Convention, owing to a lack of consensus and the politicization of some issues. We also call for the promotion of international cooperation in the field of chemical activities for purposes not prohibited under the Convention, without any discrimination or restriction. We invite all States that have not yet signed or ratified the Convention to do so as soon as possible. The recent accession of the State of Palestine as the 193rd State party is a significant step towards achieving the Convention's universality.

The use of chemical weapons and toxic chemicals as weapons anywhere, by anyone and under any circumstances is reprehensible and completely contrary to international law, particularly the provisions of the Convention. Those responsible for the use of chemical weapons must be held accountable. NAM reiterates its condemnation of Israel's military aggression against the Gaza Strip, in 2009 and in July and August of 2014, and the occupying Power's indiscriminate shelling and bombing of Palestinian civilian areas. International humanitarian support providing special care and assistance to all victims suffering from the effects of exposure to chemical weapons is urgently needed. States parties to the Convention and members of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) should work to meet those needs. Members of NAM that are States parties to the CWC greatly value the OPCW and emphasize the importance of consensus in that regard. The OPCW should be strengthened to enable it to deal with its current and future challenges within the confines of the CWC, without distorting the OPCW's mandate, which could render it susceptible to political manoeuvring.

The NAM States parties to the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) consider that the Convention represents an important component of the international

legal architecture related to WMDs. We recognize that its lack of a verification system continues to pose a challenge to the Convention's effectiveness, and call for the resumption of the multilateral negotiations to conclude a non-discriminatory, legally binding protocol dealing with all articles of the Convention in a balanced and comprehensive manner in order to sustainably strengthen the Convention, including through verification measures. We urge the party that has rejected the negotiations to reconsider its policy.

We further emphasize the need to enhance, without restrictions, international cooperation, assistance and exchanges in toxins, biological agents, equipment and technology for peaceful purposes without discrimination, in conformity with the Convention. In the context of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) and the subsequent related resolutions, NAM emphasizes the importance of ensuring that no action by the Security Council undermines the Charter of the United Nations, existing multilateral treaties on WMDs or international organizations established in that regard, as well as the functions, power and role of the General Assembly.

In conclusion, NAM reaffirms the need to prevent the emergence of new types of WMDs, and therefore supports the necessity of monitoring the situation and triggering international action, as required. The full NAM statement will be available on PaperSmart.

Mr. Osmundsen (Norway): I have the honour to take the floor on behalf of the Nordic countries — Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Sweden and my own country, Norway.

The risk of biological and chemical weapons continues to threaten international peace and security. Chemical weapons are being used in flagrant violation of the global ban and at the risk of undermining the existing norms against the use of weapons of mass destruction. The Nordic countries therefore consider the strong focus of the Secretary-General's Agenda for Disarmament on non-proliferation and chemical and biological weapons very timely.

The Nordic countries are deeply concerned about the Syrian regime's continued possession of chemical weapons. All chemical weapons in the possession of the Syrian Arab Republic should have been declared and destroyed. The Declaration Assessment Team of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) concluded that the declarations provided by the Syrian authorities are insufficient and marred by

errors. We strongly urge Syria to immediately disclose all the relevant information and completely fulfil its declaration obligations. The report of the OPCW Fact-finding Mission concerning the incident last year in Douma, in Syria, concludes that an attack with chemical weapons did take place. Those responsible for that horrible atrocity must be held accountable. We commend the OPCW Technical Secretariat for its impartial and objective work.

The attack using chemical-warfare agents in Salisbury in the United Kingdom last year continues to be an issue of great concern to our countries. We reaffirm our solidarity with the United Kingdom in the face of that grave challenge to our collective security. We reiterate our shared analysis that it is highly likely that Russia was responsible for the attack and that there is no plausible alternative explanation. The Nordic countries are also actively participating in the work of the International Partnership against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons. Against that backdrop, we will continue to support the OPCW and the Technical Secretariat politically, financially and technically.

Ensuring universal adherence to the Biological Weapons Convention and its full implementation are key tasks that require the active engagement of its States parties. The financial situation facing the Convention is worrisome, and we want to take this opportunity to once again call on all States parties to pay their assessed contributions in full, on time and without delay. Meanwhile, the Nordic countries are continuing their engagement to reduce biological-weapon threats within the framework of the Secretary-General's investigative mechanism, the Global Partnership against the Spread of Weapons of Mass Destruction, Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) and the Global Health Security Agenda.

Finally, we would like to touch on the issue of ballistic missiles. Ballistic-missile programmes can be highly destabilizing, particularly in regions where there is tension. Restraint is of the essence. Moreover, a lack of transparency and predictability with regard to ballistic-missile tests could result in miscalculations with devastating effects. That is why the Nordic countries support The Hague Code of Conduct and call on all States that have not yet subscribed to it to do so as soon as possible. The full version of this statement will be found on PaperSmart.

Mr. Vongxay (Lao People's Democratic Republic): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the States members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) — Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Viet Nam and my own country, the Lao People's Democratic Republic.

ASEAN welcomed the Secretary-General's Agenda for Disarmament, in particular with regard to ensuring respect for norms against chemical and biological weapons, which concern the interests of all humankind. Given the fact that other weapons of mass destruction (WMDs), whether detonated intentionally or by accident, can cause massive loss of life, damage to property and great harm to the environment, ASEAN member States condemn in the strongest possible terms the use of such weapons by any party under any circumstances, since that constitutes a serious violation of international law. ASEAN therefore reiterates that the international community should fully and effectively implement all treaties concerning weapons of mass destruction.

With regard to chemical weapons, all ASEAN member States are party to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC). ASEAN recognizes that the Convention remains one of the most successful disarmament instruments in its complete prohibition of an entire category of WMDs, in strict accordance with international law. ASEAN member States take their international obligations seriously in that regard. ASEAN believes that the international community should increase its efforts to strengthen international cooperation in order to eliminate chemical weapons and enhance international support with a view to helping all victims suffering from the effects of chemical weapons. ASEAN commends the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) for its unwavering efforts to support the implementation of the provisions of the CWC. ASEAN particularly welcomes the progress made in eliminating chemical stockpiles since the CWC's entry into force, in 1997.

ASEAN member States are party to the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC), and we recognize that the BWC represents a critical component of the international legal framework related to WMDs. ASEAN therefore reaffirms its support for the efforts of the international community to prevent terrorists and other non-State actors from acquiring such WMDs and their means of distribution by enhancing cooperation

in information-sharing. ASEAN recognizes the threats and dangers of the existence and use of chemical, biological and radiological weapons, and calls for universal adherence to the applicable international legal instruments prohibiting such weapons. In that regard, we emphasize the importance of the full and effective implementation of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) and other WMD-related treaties.

In terms of regional cooperation, ASEAN is also committed to improving its regional capacity to address chemical, biological and radiological threats. At their twelfth meeting, held in Singapore last year, the ASEAN Defence Ministers announced the establishment of an ASEAN network of chemical, biological and radiological defence experts to share best practices and make rapid contact during chemical, biological and radiological crises. Moreover, at their thirteenth meeting, held in Thailand in July, ASEAN Defence Ministers adopted and signed a joint declaration on sustainable security.

In conclusion, I would like to reaffirm ASEAN's support for the work of the OPCW and to stress the importance of enhancing international support for States parties in need of assistance in building their national capacities for implementing treaties related to WMDs, in accordance with national and international law and the Charter of the United Nations.

Mr. Hassan (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): The Group of Arab States aligns itself with the statement just made by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.

The Arab Group is committed to its steadfast principled position on the establishment of a world free of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs), whether nuclear, chemical or biological, while prioritizing the issue of creating a zone in the Middle East free of nuclear weapons and other WMDs, in compliance with the relevant international resolutions. It is important to recall that the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament identified its priorities clearly and by consensus, and it decided to attach the highest priority to nuclear disarmament. However, we have so far seen no tangible progress in nuclear disarmament or prohibition comparable to the progress made in the area of chemical and biological weapons. The Arab Group has played an effective role in the efforts to get rid of WMDs. We continue to support both the Biological Weapons Convention

and the Chemical Weapons Convention, and to work to realize their objectives. We also condemn any use of WMDs by any party, in any circumstances.

The Arab Group stresses that the accession of Israel to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) as a non-nuclear party would help to universalize the Treaty and build confidence, in addition to achieving regional and international security while fostering the credibility of the international disarmament and non-proliferation system. Israel is the only country in the Middle East that has not acceded to any of the three treaties related to WMDs.

Despite the tireless efforts of the Arab Group and the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, the failure of the 2015 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons has had negative effects, such as the current impasse with regard to ridding the Middle East of WMDs. The outcomes of prior Review Conferences included practical measures based on the three pillars of the NPT and aimed at implementing the 1995 decision on the Middle East. In a bold and well-intentioned decision, the Arab States agreed to expand the scope of arms-control measures in the Middle East to include other WMDs in addition to nuclear weapons, which would nullify the pretext for adhering to nuclear weapons as a deterrent means for a single party in the region. The Middle East would be the only region for which a treaty would be concluded that would free it of all WMDs, not just nuclear weapons, as is the case with other such regional treaties. The Arab Group calls for promoting further international efforts to establish a zone free of nuclear weapons and other WMDs in the Middle East.

In that regard, the Arab Group reiterates the importance of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction, to be organized by the United Nations in November and chaired by Jordan. The Conference will aim to establish a zone free of nuclear weapons and other WMDs in the Middle East, in accordance with General Assembly decision 73/546. We urge all invited parties to participate in good faith and to negotiate a binding treaty pertaining to the issue, thereby contributing to the promotion of international and regional peace and security.

Mr. Hwang (France) (*spoke in French*): We, the States participating in the International Partnership against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons,

are united in our desire to preserve the international standards and norms against the use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere, under any circumstances. We are determined to continue to combat the re-emergence of the use of chemical weapons and prevent impunity for those who resort to the use of such weapons or contribute to their development.

We reaffirm our strong support for the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC). We call on the four remaining States that are not party to the Convention to join it without delay. We also reiterate our full confidence in the impartiality, professionalism and capacity of the Technical Secretariat of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) to implement the decisions taken and tasks assigned by the States parties. Despite the lack of agreement on a final document at the fourth Review Conference of the Chemical Weapons Convention, we reiterate our strong commitment to working together within the OPCW for a world free of chemical weapons.

We would like to remind the Committee that our Partnership was founded on 23 January last year to strengthen our cooperation and protect the CWC. Forty States from all geographical regions and the European Union have joined it so far. Our experts have worked together on several occasions and will meet again in Paris on 14 and 15 November. Experts from our various countries will continue to work on the implementation of practical and informative activities that raise awareness.

With regard to measures taken by the OPCW, the members of the Partnership called for and supported last year's adoption by the fourth special session of the Conference of the States Parties of the decision entitled "Addressing the threat from chemical weapons use". We commend the determination of the States parties to assist the OPCW in its mission to establish arrangements for identifying the perpetrators of the use of chemical weapons in Syria, and we welcome the establishment of the Investigation and Identification Team.

We also want to highlight another consequence of that decision, which is the OPCW's implementation of its arrangement to preserve and authorize information-sharing with the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism to Assist in the Investigation and Prosecution of Persons Responsible for the Most Serious Crimes under International Law Committed in the Syrian Arab Republic since March

2011. With regard to the investigation, we welcome the report published in July and a further report published in October on the working methods and tools of the team and deplore the groundless questioning of the legitimacy of the mandate under which the Technical Secretariat was directed to establish the Investigation and Identification Team.

We also condemn the lack of cooperation that the Investigation and Identification Team has had to face. We condemn Syria's refusal to grant the head of the Team access to its territory and confidential information relating to its chemical military programme. We note with concern the findings of the Fact-finding Mission on the use of chemical weapons in Al-Lataminah, Saraqib and Douma. We consider it highly likely that the Syrian armed forces are responsible for those attacks, taking into account their previous use of chemical weapons, among other things. We condemn the use of false and fabricated news stories and other tools in campaigns designed to deliberately create misinformation about the use of chemical weapons and avoid attribution and accountability.

We continue to condemn the use of a nerve agent in the United Kingdom in Salisbury on 4 March last year, and its accidental exposure in Amesbury on 30 June last year, which resulted in the death of one individual, left several others critically ill and threatened the safety of the wider public. We share the United Kingdom's analysis that it is highly likely that Russia was responsible for the attack and that there is no plausible alternative explanation.

We call for the enlargement of the International Partnership against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons and invite all Member States to join us in order to send a clear message about our shared refusal to accept impunity for anyone and our commitment to putting an end to the use of such weapons. My full statement will be made available on PaperSmart.

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

Ms. Kemppainen (European Union): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its member States. The candidate countries North Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania; the country of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina; as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia, align themselves with this statement.

The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) and their means of delivery remains a grave threat to international peace and security. Preventing impunity and the re-emergence of chemical weapons should be at the heart of our endeavours during this session of the First Committee. The European Union will devote significant attention to this issue as a supporter of action 9 of the Secretary-General's Agenda for Disarmament. Any use of chemical weapons anywhere, at any time, under any circumstances, and by anyone, whether a State or non-State actor, is unacceptable and violates international law and norms. Those responsible for their use must be held accountable.

We urge the Syrian Arab Republic to fully honour its obligations as a State party to the Chemical Weapons Convention, extend its full cooperation to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), declare the chemical weapons it still possesses and destroy its chemical-weapon programme completely and irreversibly. We stress our full trust in the professional, impartial and objective work of the OPCW. We welcome the establishment of its Investigation and Identification Team and commend the OPCW Technical Secretariat for the progress made to date.

The European Union also actively participates in the work of the International Partnership against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons and has in place a dedicated sanctions regime against the proliferation and use of chemical weapons.

The European Union provides significant support for the OPCW's activities, with voluntary contributions that have amounted to €57 million since 2004. We once again call on the States not yet party to the Chemical Weapons Convention — the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Egypt, Israel and South Sudan — to join it without further delay.

The financial situation of the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) remains extremely precarious. We once again urge all States to honour their financial obligations. We reaffirm our strong support for the BWC, the global norm against biological weapons, and would like to point to the European Union's long-standing efforts to strengthen the important Convention. The EU and its member States have also invested in improving the operational capabilities of the Secretary-General's Mechanism for Investigation of Alleged Use of Chemical and Biological Weapons. We underline

the continued key importance of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) and its follow-up resolutions.

The EU reaffirms its full support for the establishment of a zone free of nuclear and other WMDs and their delivery systems in the Middle East. The EU underlines the importance of ensuring that Iran abides by the provisions of all relevant Security Council resolutions, notably resolution 2231 (2015), which stipulates that Iran should refrain from undertaking any activity related to ballistic missiles designed to be capable of delivering nuclear weapons, including launches using ballistic-missile technology.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea's repeated ballistic-missile launches represent a grave threat to regional and international peace and security and violate multiple Security Council resolutions. We call on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to immediately halt all of its launches and to fully comply with all of its international obligations and commitments. The EU recalls that all Member States are obliged to implement the restrictions targeting the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's illegal activities and should do their utmost to curb the proliferation of goods and technology that could contribute to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's programmes related to nuclear or other weapons of mass destruction or to ballistic missiles.

The European Union and its member States strongly support The Hague Code of Conduct. We call on all States, particularly those with significant ballistic-missile or space-launch-vehicle activities, to adhere to the Code. The EU also strongly supports the Missile Technology Control Regime and other export-control regimes. The full version of this statement will be made available online.

Mr. Baumann (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): Chemical and biological weapons represent a serious threat to international and human security. It is essential that the universal ban on such weapons be upheld and that all States that have not yet done so accede to the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological Weapons Convention without delay. It is also crucial that all States abide by the rules and fully comply with the provisions of both Conventions.

For the past seven years, the ban on chemical weapons has been challenged by repeated instances of their use. Switzerland condemns any use of chemical weapons in the strongest possible terms and once

again underlines that their use is prohibited in any circumstances. We emphasize that violations of the prohibition of chemical weapons cannot be tolerated and must be thoroughly investigated, with appropriate measures taken to ensure compliance with the Convention and accountability for perpetrators.

The Swiss Government supported the establishment of a mechanism within the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) for identifying the origins of the use of chemical weapons and its perpetrators, and we welcome the progress made in setting up the Investigation and Identification Team. We must continue to support the OPCW both politically and financially to ensure the Team's effectiveness. Switzerland fully backs the Investigation and Identification Team's mandate and has absolutely no doubts about its legality and legitimacy. Our voluntary financial contribution to the Team earlier this year demonstrated our support in that regard. We have also given financial support to the process set up to learn lessons from the second phase of the OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism. We want to reiterate Switzerland's full confidence in the work and findings of the OPCW, which has consistently carried out its tasks in a professional and impartial way and with full respect for its mandate, whether in the context of the Fact-finding Mission, the Declaration Assessment Team or the Joint Investigative Mechanism.

The Chemical Weapons Convention must remain relevant in an evolving context and in the light of technological developments. To that end, Switzerland believes that we must address the issue of the aerosolized use of central-nervous-system-acting chemicals for law-enforcement purposes. An increasing number of States parties fear that the continuing lack of action on this important issue risks undermining the object and purpose of the Convention. After more than a decade of outreach and awareness-raising efforts and three Review Conferences that could not agree on addressing the issue, it is high time that the OPCW's decision-making bodies took action. Australia, the United States and Switzerland have therefore initiated a process with the aim of arriving at a decision that reflects our concerns and will enable a policy discussion to take place.

The full version of Switzerland's statement, which also identifies ways to strengthen the Biological Weapons Convention, can be found on PaperSmart.

The Acting Chair: I now give the floor to the representative of Poland to introduce draft resolution A/C.1/74/L.10.

Mr. Broilo (Poland): Poland fully associates itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union, and I would like to add some remarks in my national capacity.

In this thematic debate Poland traditionally attaches great attention to issues related to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC). We remain committed to the core mission of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and will continue to support its efforts. The bedrock of the CWC, the complete prohibition of chemical weapons, is being challenged by repeated instances of the use of chemical weapons, raising questions about the CWC's integrity, the OPCW's credibility and their future. The consensus at the OPCW has been broken, and we are still a long way from rebuilding it. Last year's Review Conference of the States Parties to the CWC confirmed that perception. Despite broad consultations and its best efforts, the OPCW has not had a united assessment of its activities in recent years with unambiguous guidance for its development. That negative environment cannot be an excuse for inaction. The OPCW has to be able to perform its core functions and adapt to the changing security environment. For that reason, Poland supports the OPCW's efforts to implement the comprehensive decision of June last year on addressing the threat posed by the use of chemical weapons. That will send a message to those who use chemical weapons that their unacceptable acts will not be tolerated and they will be held to account.

In that context, Poland, as in previous years, will introduce draft resolution A/C.1/74/L.10, "Implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction". Its key goal is providing the international community's strong, clear support for the CWC and the OPCW. Poland conducted an open, inclusive and transparent process in that regard in The Hague and New York, and we thank all delegations for their engagement.

This year Poland once again had to deal with fundamentally divergent views that were contradictory and mutually exclusive. As the draft resolution's sole sponsor, Poland has done its utmost to provide a factual and up-to-date text. Building on the work at the OPCW,

we reflected in a balanced manner issues that are critical to the implementation of the CWC, but we also remained frank when it came to the key challenges to the Convention. Poland hopes that the Committee will adopt the text of the draft resolution.

The full version of our statement will be available on PaperSmart.

Mr. Wood (United States of America): The challenge of preserving the international norm against the use of chemical weapons continues to be a daunting task with every new allegation, abhorrent attack and senseless killing of the Syrian people by the Al-Assad regime. Last month United States Secretary of State Pompeo highlighted our Government's determination that the regime had again used chemical weapons, in an attack on 19 May in Latakia province in Syria. It is imperative that the international community either stand against the use of chemical weapons or risk its normalization.

That is precisely why the work of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and support for it remain a vital part of preserving the global norm against the use of chemical weapons and the ideal platform for addressing future threats and challenges. In that view, the twenty-fourth session of the OPCW's Conference of States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), in November, presents a rare and significant opportunity to add the Novichok chemical families to the CWC's Annex on Chemicals. Those agents have no use other than to harm or kill, as was seen in the towns of Salisbury and Amesbury in the United Kingdom. We call on States parties to support that addition.

It is also time to take concrete measures to address the threat posed by central-nervous-system-acting chemicals such as fentanyl. Twenty-four nations, including the United States, have sponsored a draft decision that would make clear the understanding that the aerosolized use of central-nervous-system-acting chemicals is inconsistent with law-enforcement purposes as a "purpose not prohibited". We call on States parties to support the draft decision. As States parties, we cannot acquiesce in non-compliance with the CWC but must call out such concerns and address them accordingly.

Other challenges to non-proliferation and disarmament are less dramatic, but still serious. There are practical steps that could be taken now to

strengthen the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC), and there is broad support for doing that. However, a small number of States parties have repeatedly blocked action, insisting that the only way ahead is to return to negotiations on a protocol to the Convention. We could be strengthening implementation, ensuring prompt, effective assistance in the event of an intentional outbreak and improving international cooperation, but we are not. The United States calls on those obstructing progress to join in efforts to reach consensus on such measures. Those who continue to advocate for a new legal instrument have a right to do so, but they should no longer paralyse the BWC.

The other major challenge facing the BWC is its tenuous financial situation. Measures adopted last December have helped, but the only lasting solution is for States parties to make their financial contributions on time and in full. Those in arrears should settle their debts without delay, and those that are financially able should consider making contributions to the new Working Capital Fund.

Mr. Gorman (United Kingdom): The United Kingdom aligns itself with the statement made by the observer of the European Union, and I would like to add some further remarks in my national capacity.

The complete ban on the production and use of chemical and biological weapons remains a central pillar of international law and the international rules-based system. The fact that chemical weapons continue to be used demonstrates that some are still prepared to flout the norms of civilized behaviour. We condemn any use of both chemical and biological weapons. We must all persist in striving to consign those heinous weapons to history. To ensure accountability and deter future use, it is vital to identify the perpetrators of chemical-weapon attacks.

Yet Russia continues to prevent effective action in the Security Council to investigate and hold to account those responsible for the use of chemical weapons in Syria. Last year's emphatic vote enabling the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) to attribute responsibility for the use of chemical weapons in Syria underlines the international community's determination to reinforce the norm. We urge all States to uphold the Chemical Weapons Convention under their responsibilities as signatories and to help strengthen the capability of the OPCW, which is tasked with protecting that important Convention.

The Biological Weapons Convention is the cornerstone of the international ban on biological weapons. We welcome the accession of Tanzania, which deposited its instrument of ratification in London on 14 August, and we call on all States that have not yet done so to follow suit. We must also continue to promote the Convention's full and effective implementation. The United Kingdom welcomed the agreement by the 2018 Meeting of States Parties on measures to ease the Convention's financial crisis and provide stability to the Implementation Support Unit. The United Kingdom also calls for further international cooperation to build and sustain the Secretary-General's Mechanism for Investigation of Alleged Use of Chemical and Biological Weapons, the only international tool for investigating allegations of the use of biological weapons.

Finally, the United Kingdom commends the central role that Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) plays in preventing nuclear, chemical and biological weapons and their means of delivery and related materials from falling into the hands of non-State actors, including terrorists. The adoption of resolution 2325 (2016) was the most significant revision to the work of resolution 1540 (2004) in its now almost 15-year history, and a welcome example of Council consensus on non-proliferation issues. We must continue to promote its effective implementation if we are to tackle the continuing threat posed by non-State actors, including terrorists.

Mr. Hassan (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): I shall deliver a condensed version of my statement under this cluster. My full statement will be made available on PaperSmart.

The first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament stressed the vital importance of nuclear disarmament. The adoption in 2017 of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons was a historic step, as it equated nuclear weapons — which are the most prevalent weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) and contradict the fundamental principles of humanity and international humanitarian law — with other WMDs, and established an important customary rule within international law.

Despite the chronic tension and instability in the Middle East and the fact that we have suffered from consecutive wars inflicted on us for more than four decades, Egypt has demonstrated its good intentions by acceding to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and meeting all its obligations

under the Treaty. It also joined the 1995 consensus on the decision to extend the Treaty indefinitely, based on the fact that the extension package included a resolution, which has yet to be implemented, on the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and other WMDs in the Middle East.

Egypt is requesting accelerated and serious practical steps in order to redress the grave security imbalance in the Middle East that has resulted from one party's continued obstruction of the efforts to rid the region of WMDs. Well-intentioned, serious participation in the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction, to be held in November, will be the first of those long-awaited steps.

Egypt is opposed to the use of all WMDs by any party, under any circumstances, and we have always demonstrated our credibility in that regard. I want to emphasize the clear contradiction in that regard in the positions of certain States that have called for the universalization of the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological Weapons Convention and have asked various other States to accede to them, while failing to call on Israel to accede to the NPT. They are reluctant to support the Conference on a zone free of WMDs in the Middle East on the pretext that the political and security circumstances in the region are not favourable. Many of those States themselves possess nuclear weapons, or are protected by a nuclear umbrella, at the same time that they claim that the international circumstances are not conducive to progress on getting rid of nuclear weapons.

We would like to remind those States that humanitarian principles are indivisible and that the security of some States is no more important than that of others, because all States are equal in rights and sovereignty. We advise them to reconsider their positions, as they reflect nothing but a blatant double standard.

Mr. Jadoon (Pakistan): The conventions prohibiting biological and chemical weapons — the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) and the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) — are important pillars of the international security architecture. They have made significant contributions to the goal of general and complete disarmament by comprehensively outlawing two entire categories of weapons of mass destruction.

We value the BWC's contribution to global security and its potential for promoting international cooperation in the peaceful uses of the life sciences. Pakistan believes that the most effective method for strengthening the BWC is through the conclusion of a legally binding protocol that covers all articles of the Convention and includes a multilateral verification mechanism. Without prejudice to the priority that we attach to the conclusion of such a protocol, we will continue to engage constructively with the BWC community to explore progress where consensus is possible. We participate actively in its meetings, including during the current intersessional programme. This year Pakistan had the honour of chairing the BWC Meeting of Experts on assistance, preparedness and response. Pakistan views the Secretary-General's Mechanism for Investigation of Alleged Use of Chemical and Biological Weapons as an operational tool for investigation. However, neither the Mechanism nor the voluntary confidence-building measures can replace the need for a dedicated verification regime for the Convention.

Pakistan remains committed to the CWC and continues to actively and constructively participate in the work of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). We firmly believe in preserving the effectiveness, objectivity and credibility of its verification regime. Distortions in the OPCW's mandate that could render it susceptible to political manoeuvring must be avoided. We hope that the practice of decision-making by consensus on CWC-related issues in both the General Assembly and the OPCW will be restored.

Pakistan condemns the use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere, under any circumstances. Those responsible for such acts must be identified and held accountable. The OPCW's role in dealing with cases of the use of chemical weapons must be exercised in strict accordance with the Convention, which is unambiguous in defining the role of the Technical Secretariat. Extending the Secretariat's remit to include attribution is inconsistent with the technical nature of its work. It is for the States parties to consider issues of attribution in the light of the technical findings of the Secretariat. The OPCW should be strengthened to deal with ongoing and future challenges, but within the confines of the Convention, while according priority to the complete destruction of both declared and abandoned chemical weapons.

Together with the threat of the use of chemical and biological weapons by States, their use by non-State actors must also be effectively addressed. Pakistan's comprehensive reports to the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1540 (2004) provide a detailed matrix of the series of measures undertaken by my country in that regard, including procedures, mechanisms and legislation, along with details of their enforcement. As a mainstream partner in global non-proliferation efforts, Pakistan has also instituted an elaborate national export-control regime that is harmonized with the relevant international regimes, including that of the Australia Group. The full text of our statement will be posted on PaperSmart.

Mr. Incarnato (Italy): Italy aligns itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union. I would like to add some remarks in my national capacity.

Italy remains fully committed to effective multilateral action to combat the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery, which are a growing threat to international peace and security. Securing sensitive materials, especially from access by terrorist networks, and implementing effective export controls continue to be major challenges. Those challenges point to the need for the universal and effective implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC). We call on all States that are not yet parties to those Conventions to ratify or accede to them without delay or conditions.

Italy remains firmly committed to supporting the CWC and the work of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), and we reaffirm the importance of ensuring full compliance with the CWC and the 1925 Geneva Protocol. The international community has a shared responsibility to enforce the prohibition of chemical weapons and support the international chemical non-proliferation regime, which is essential to international peace and security. We are deeply concerned about the repeated instances of the use of chemical weapons in recent years. We condemn their use in the strongest possible terms by anyone, anywhere, at any time and under any circumstances. We must respond to that alarming trend, as the Secretary-General emphasized in his Agenda for Disarmament, by ensuring accountability and continuing to take a clear stance against impunity for such heinous crimes. Italy therefore actively

participates in the International Partnership against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons.

We welcomed the June 2018 decision of the special session of the Conference of the States Parties to the CWC and the beginning of the work of the Investigation and Identification Team, established within the OPCW Technical Secretariat to identify the perpetrators of the use of chemical weapons in Syria. We also reaffirm our support for the OPCW's Fact-finding Mission to continue investigating allegations of the use of chemical weapons. We urge Syria to honour its obligations as a State party to the CWC and extend its full cooperation to the OPCW, including its Declaration Assessment Team and Investigation and Identification Team, in order to resolve all outstanding issues relating to the implementation of the Convention.

The BWC is of the utmost importance, as is the need to strengthen the international architecture regulating biological weapons. The Convention operates in a highly dynamic environment characterized by rapid scientific and technological developments. It is therefore essential to provide it with the tools and procedures necessary to respond more rapidly to emerging needs and challenges.

Finally, Italy remains deeply concerned about the increasing risk of weapons of mass destruction falling into the hands of non-State actors, particularly terrorist networks.

Mr. Beerwerth (Germany): Germany fully aligns itself with the statement made by the observer of the European Union.

The Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) remains a major pillar of the international architecture for weapons of mass destruction, arms control and non-proliferation. Rapid developments in the fields of biotechnology and the life sciences should be carefully monitored in view of their dual-use potential. That was the key outcome of a ministerial conference held in Berlin in March, entitled "Capturing technology. Rethinking arms control". As a result, Germany took up the previous suggestions of others and proposed that a scientific and technological experts advisory forum be established under the auspices of the BWC.

The Chemical Weapons Convention is the world's most successful disarmament convention, but it is under stress. The global ban on the use of chemical weapons has been blatantly infringed numerous times by Syria, as well as by attempts to harm civilians in the United

Kingdom. That cannot stand without consequences. We have to enforce the rules that we have set ourselves, which include identifying those who violate the Chemical Weapons Convention and holding them to account. No Government or group of non-State actors can count on impunity when using chemical weapons. We therefore strongly support the International Partnership against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons and call on States to actively participate in that alliance. The establishment by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) of the Investigation and Identification Team, in accordance with the decisions of the States parties, has been an important step forward. We are looking forward to receiving the Investigation and Identification Team's first report by the end of this year.

We want to express our ongoing strong support for the OPCW and its Syria-related missions in particular. We remain fully committed to supporting the OPCW's efforts to work with Syria, and we urge Syria yet again to cooperate fully. Germany welcomes the structured dialogue between the Director-General of the OPCW and the Syrian Government on its outstanding issues. It is high time that Syria fully declared its entire chemical-weapon programme and dismantled it under OPCW verification.

The Acting Chair: I give the floor to the representative of India to introduce draft resolution A/C.1/74/L.16.

Mr. Sharma (India): The risk of weapons of mass destruction falling into the hands of terrorists presents a grave security challenge to the international community. India's draft resolution entitled "Measures to prevent terrorists from acquiring weapons of mass destruction" (A/C.1/74/L.16), first adopted in 2002, has continued to command consensus and growing support both in the First Committee and the General Assembly. As in previous years, we are introducing the draft resolution again this year, and we hope that it will continue to elicit strong support from all Member States.

The Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) is a unique disarmament treaty, providing for the elimination of an entire category of weapons of mass destruction. Today India has the world's second-largest number of declared chemical facilities, receives one of the largest numbers of industry inspections from the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and has a flawless track record of verification

inspections. In order to achieve the objectives and purpose of the CWC, it is important to address the new challenges that are emerging in an ever-changing global environment. In that regard, my delegation shares the concern about allegations and incidents of the use of chemical weapons, including by non-State actors, especially terrorist groups in various parts of the world. India has maintained that all investigations of alleged uses of chemical weapons should be conducted strictly in accordance with the provisions of the Convention.

India attaches high importance to the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) as the first disarmament treaty banning an entire class of weapons of mass destruction. India is committed to improving the effectiveness of the BWC and strengthening its implementation. The lack of a comprehensive protocol to strengthen the implementation of all the aspects of the BWC has created a gap in its effective implementation. While recognizing that there is no consensus on commencing negotiations for a legally binding protocol at present, India strongly believes that the long-term sustainability of the Convention should be rooted in legally binding measures, with States parties showing collective confidence in the Convention. We believe that the intersessional process, as established by the 2017 Meeting of States Parties under India's chairmanship, has made a significant contribution to strengthening the Convention. We hope that the substantive work conducted during the intersessional period will lay the foundation for a successful outcome at the ninth Review Conference in 2021. The full text of my statement will be made available on PaperSmart.

Ms. Reyes (Philippines): The Philippines associates itself with the statements delivered by the representatives of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, and Indonesia, on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.

The Philippines is committed to three instruments on weapons of mass destruction, namely, the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC), the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. The comprehensive implementation of those instruments can contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and constitutes a response to the call of the Secretary-General in his Agenda for Disarmament for linking disarmament with development.

The Philippines plays an active role in the implementation of the BWC. It is important to ensure the financial sustainability of the Convention and to deliberate during the intersessional process on measures that will help to strengthen international cooperation and preparedness, response and assistance and foster greater synergies among the relevant international and regional organizations. The Philippines supports all efforts to facilitate the achievement of concrete outcomes in the 2021 BWC Review Conference.

With regard to the CWC, the Philippines is committed to the full, effective and non-discriminatory implementation of the Convention. The use of chemical weapons anywhere, at any time, by anyone and under any circumstances is unacceptable and would be a violation of international law. The Philippines supports the work of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and is up to date with its obligations. We continue to work to enact domestic laws for the implementation of the CWC and build our capacity to respond to any chemical attack through the establishment of additional chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear units, the training of personnel and the provision of necessary equipment. The Philippines recognizes the importance of capacity-building programmes, particularly in cooperation with the OPCW, that contribute to the Philippines readiness to quickly address and provide the required assistance when faced with the threat or actual use of chemical weapons.

The Philippines continues to host the European Union Chemical Biological Radiological and Nuclear Risk Mitigation Centres of Excellence Initiative in South-East Asia, which demonstrates our seriousness about fortifying our defences against possible terrorist attacks in the Philippines and the region. We have also implemented a chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear national action plan to build our capacity to prevent, prepare and respond to the risks associated with chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear materials.

The Philippines is deeply concerned about the existence and proliferation of other weapons of mass destruction, particularly biological and chemical weapons, that threaten international peace and security. We call on Member States that have yet to sign or ratify the BWC and the CWC to do so without delay, as universality is crucial to their success.

Mr. Omarov (Kazakhstan): The Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) are vital international legal instruments for guiding multilateral efforts in the total elimination of specific types of weapons of mass destruction. They provide guidelines for strict and effective international control that in turn will lead to the goal of general and complete disarmament.

We continue to support the universalization of the BWC. Every new accession helps to strengthen the global norm against biological and toxin weapons, thereby reducing the risk of their proliferation. The development and implementation of effective and coordinated verification mechanisms guarantee that the provisions of the BWC are followed, so that the regime functions efficiently and thoroughly.

Kazakhstan fulfils its obligations under Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) and one of its central requirements, the creation of an effective system of export controls for the transfer of goods and technologies. The standards that we have developed comply with the strictest requirements.

Kazakhstan considers the CWC and all of its provisions addressing concerns about the alleged use of chemical weapons to be a top priority. Any use of chemical weapons is completely inhumane, and therefore cannot be justified. We reaffirm the need to address the issue in the light of international law in an impartial and transparent manner. Efforts to strengthen the Convention should be based solely on amendments made to the Convention so that they gain global and wide acceptance. We call on the countries possessing chemical weapons to fulfil their obligations under the terms stipulated by the Convention and to destroy their arsenals within the agreed time frame. We also call on all States that may possess chemical weapons to eliminate them and join the Convention immediately, with no preconditions.

In order to contribute to global non-proliferation efforts, Kazakhstan has established an effective export-control system that is based on international regimes, including that of the Australia Group. We want to assure the international community of our country's full commitment, political will and resources, both in human expertise and other areas, to ensuring people's well-being and security and a peaceful world.

Ms. Rodríguez Abascal (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): Our delegation aligns itself with the statement made

by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.

Cuba reiterates its support for the total and complete prohibition and elimination, in a transparent, verifiable and irreversible manner, of all weapons of mass destruction, which is the only absolute guarantee preventing the acquisition and use of such weapons. Our country is a State party to the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological Weapons Convention and strictly complies with their provisions. Cuba does not possess, nor does it intend to possess, any type of weapon of mass destruction and firmly rejects the use of such weapons by any actor under any circumstances.

We regret that the fourth Review Conference of the Chemical Weapons Convention concluded without the adoption of a final report. We also reject selective, biased and politically motivated approaches to the implementation of the Convention and the creation of mechanisms and procedures beyond its scope that alter the technical mandate of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. If we are to achieve the objectives and principles of the Chemical Weapons Convention, we must eliminate all categories of chemical weapons. We call on the United States, the only country possessing such weapons that has not completed the destruction of its remaining declared arsenals, to complete the process as soon as possible and to do it under international verification. In addition, the speedy implementation of article XI of the Convention, on economic and technological development, should be full, effective and non-discriminatory and achieved through an action plan.

The only truly effective and sustainable way to strengthen the Biological Weapons Convention and ensure its comprehensive and balanced implementation is through the adoption of a legally binding protocol that prohibits such weapons and includes a verification mechanism. If it had not been for the fervent opposition of the United States in 2001, we would now have such an instrument. The full, effective and non-discriminatory application of article X of the Biological Weapons Convention, pertaining to international cooperation for peaceful purposes, also remains a pending and urgent priority. Cuba rejects and demands the immediate removal of limitations and restrictions that impede the broadest possible exchanges for peaceful purposes, particularly for developing countries, of materials, equipment and technology for chemical and biological activities, in line with the provisions of the relevant

international conventions. A clear example of that is the commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States on Cuba.

In conclusion, we reiterate that no measure adopted by the Security Council or selective and discriminatory initiative promoted by groups of countries, outside of the multilateral framework, can undermine the central role of the General Assembly and the relevant multilateral disarmament treaties.

Mr. Leopoldino (Brazil): The Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) is the gold standard for multilateral regimes on weapons of mass destruction. It has established a comprehensive, legally binding and non-discriminatory prohibition and is equipped with a full-fledged and effective verification mechanism. It is therefore regrettable that the prohibitions enshrined in the Convention have been challenged in recent years by multiple cases of chemical substances being used as weapons, particularly in the conflict in Syria. Brazil unequivocally and vehemently condemns the use of chemical weapons by anyone, under any circumstances.

Brazil also regrets that political differences over the need for greater clarification of recent uses of chemical weapons and accountability for them have eroded the culture of consensus in the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), particularly the Executive Council. We hope that culture can be restored. As regards preparations for the establishment of an Investigation and Identification Team within the OPCW, Brazil underscores the need for impartiality, balance and comprehensiveness, all essential requirements for effectively holding perpetrators of CWC violations accountable. We expect the Investigation and Identification Team to serve not only as a measure for addressing current threats arising from the use of chemical weapons but also as an effective tool for preventing the re-emergence of the development, production, stockpiling and use of chemicals as instruments of war.

Within the OPCW Brazil is both a promoter and a beneficiary of capacity-building and international cooperation initiatives. In that regard, our delegation would like to point to the holding in Rio de Janeiro in June of an exercise on assistance and protection against chemical weapons for first responders from Latin America and the Caribbean. The exercise was organized jointly by the OPCW and the Brazilian Government and was aimed at building on the skills acquired by

its attendees from basic and advanced courses held in Panama and Argentina earlier this year.

Brazil reiterates its full support for the Biological Weapons Convention. We have just passed the halfway point to the ninth Review Conference, to be held in 2021. In our view, discussions within the framework of the intersessional programme should be aimed at putting together a negotiation package for the Review Conference specifically designed to strengthen the Convention's institutional framework through a legally binding instrument with a verification regime. Scientific and technological breakthroughs in the life sciences are now occurring at a breakneck pace, which increases the risk of malicious or military uses of biological agents. That is particularly troubling given the fact that biological weapons are the least regulated weapons of mass destruction. We must show resolve in order to address those threats proactively and preventively.

Mr. Dom (Slovakia): Slovakia associates itself with the statement made by the observer of the European Union. I would also like to stress the following points from our national perspective. The full version of my statement will be posted on the PaperSmart portal.

This year's session of the First Committee is taking place in very challenging times, as we are witnessing a substantive deterioration in the global security environment. The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery remains a major challenge for the international community and is a threat to international peace and security. At the same time, the international disarmament and non-proliferation architecture, whose goal is to prevent the proliferation of those inhuman weapons, is under an increasing threat of erosion.

As a strong supporter of the Chemical Weapons Convention, Slovakia is particularly concerned about the repeated instances of the use of chemical weapons. We are also deeply concerned about efforts to undermine the impartial and highly professional work of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and its Technical Secretariat, including through disinformation and cyberattacks. In that respect, Slovakia's position remains clear and firm. Any use of chemical weapons by anybody, anywhere and under any circumstances is unacceptable. It is a violation of international law and must be condemned by all in the strongest possible terms. Those responsible, whether they be State or non-State actors, must be held

accountable and brought to justice. We underline the importance of the full implementation of the Convention by all parties.

Slovakia welcomes the establishment of the Investigation and Identification Team, which strengthens the role of the OPCW in overseeing the implementation of the ban on chemical weapons. We fully support the ongoing work of the Investigation and Identification Team and call on Syria to cooperate fully with it. Slovakia also continues to fulfil its commitments to the OPCW through tangible contributions in the form of training courses for inspectors of the Technical Secretariat and national experts from OPCW member States, held at the Slovak national chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear training centre in Zemianske Kostol'any. We are also pleased that we could contribute €30,000 towards the OPCW's new laboratory. Slovakia also takes part in and supports the efforts of the International Partnership against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons.

Slovakia considers the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) to be an important pillar of the disarmament and non-proliferation architecture. We are concerned about the BWC's continuing financial problems owing to the accumulation of arrears and several States parties' late payment of assessed contributions. We urge all that have not yet done so to honour their financial obligations without delay.

Mr. Groome (Ireland): Ireland aligns itself with the statement made by the observer of the European Union, and I would like to add the following remarks in my national capacity.

We share the view of many States here today that weapons of mass destruction have no place anywhere in our world. The presence of those weapons offers nothing to international peace and security, and the risk of non-State actors acquiring weapons of mass destruction adds a further dangerous dimension. We regard the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the Biological Weapons Convention, the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons as key instruments in the international community's efforts to achieve a world free of all weapons of mass destruction. We call on all remaining States that have not yet joined those international instruments to accede to them and complete their universalization at the earliest opportunity.

My delegation would like to voice our continued support for the work of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons in its implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention. The Convention is a key component of the non-proliferation and disarmament architecture. Its integrity and strict application must be fully guaranteed. Ireland is of the firm belief that the widespread condemnation of those who breach their obligations under the Convention must be matched by action, and we must safeguard against impunity. Ireland is a member of the International Partnership against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons, and we would like to commend France for its continued leadership of this important initiative. We look forward to continuing our collective efforts to enforce the prohibition on the use of chemical weapons and hold accountable those responsible for such abhorrent acts.

Since 1972, the Biological Weapons Convention has established an unequivocal prohibition of a full category of weapons of mass destruction. It has also contributed to increasing our collective understanding and capacity to respond to the risks associated with the proliferation of biological weapons. However, we realize that the Convention exists in a scientific context that has altered considerably from the assumptions that underpinned the original text. The fast pace of scientific developments and the dual-use nature of biological agents and toxins require us to remain open to considering ways to strengthen the Convention.

Strengthening the full range of non-proliferation and export-control regimes remains a priority. As outgoing co-Chair of the Missile Technology Control Regime, Ireland was pleased to pass that leadership role to New Zealand at a successful plenary meeting organized in Auckland earlier this year.

A longer version of this statement will be made available on PaperSmart, in which we elaborate further on the key priorities for Ireland with respect to weapons of mass destruction.

The Acting Chair: We have exhausted the time available for this meeting.

The next meeting of the Committee will be held tomorrow, Wednesday, 23 October, at 10 a.m. sharp in this conference room. The Committee will continue its consideration of the cluster “Other weapons of mass destruction”.

Before adjourning, I would like to inform delegations that the Office for Disarmament Affairs will convene an informal meeting tomorrow, Wednesday, 23 October, at 1 p.m., announcing the endorsement of the Chair-designate of the 2020 seventh Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, in this conference room, immediately after the adjournment of the deliberations of the First Committee.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.