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First Committee

5th meeting

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Official Records

Chair: Mr. Hilale(Morocco)

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

Agenda items 92 to 107 (continued)

General debate on all disarmament and international security agenda items

The Chair (*spoke in French*): Before I open the floor, I would like to remind delegations that inscription on the list of speakers for the thematic debates is now open. I also remind delegations that I count on their understanding and cooperation in respecting the time limit for statements and speaking at a reasonable speed to allow for adequate interpretation. Longer statements can be posted on the eStatements portal.

I now invite the Committee to view a pre-recorded statement by the representative of France.

A pre-recorded video statement was shown in the Conference Room.

Mr. Geng Shuang (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I would like to make a joint statement on behalf of China and the Russian Federation.

Since its entry into force in 1975, the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) has played an important role in eliminating the threat of biological weapons, preventing their proliferation and promoting the peaceful use of biological technology. The ninth Review Conference of the States parties to the BWC will be held next year. The international community must take that opportunity to strengthen the authority and effectiveness of the Convention and promote the

realization of the complete elimination of biological weapons as soon as possible.

To that end, the Foreign Ministers of the People's Republic of China and the Russian Federation today issued a joint statement on strengthening the Biological Weapons Convention. The full text of the statement reads as follows:

“The Russian Federation and China reaffirm their conviction that the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on their Destruction (BWC) is essential as a pillar of international peace and security, and their determination to safeguard the authority and effectiveness of the Convention. Today, as in 1975, its objective remains relevant—to rule out completely the possibility of biological agents being used as weapons.

“The Russian Federation and China reiterate the need for compliance with, and the further strengthening of, the BWC, including through its institutionalization and the adoption of a legally binding protocol to the Convention with an effective verification mechanism, as well as through regular consultations and cooperation in resolving any issues related to the implementation of the Convention.

“The Russian Federation and China emphasize that the BWC functions, including in what concerns the United Nations Security Council, should not be duplicated by other mechanisms. With a view to

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shaping a BWC mechanism to investigate alleged biological weapons incidents, they call on the BWC States parties to develop operating standards for the mechanism, together with technical guidelines and procedures.

“The Russian Federation and China note with concern that, over the past two decades, the BWC States parties, despite the wishes of the overwhelming majority, have failed to reach an agreement on resuming multilateral negotiations on the protocol to the Convention, which were suspended in 2001 when the United States unilaterally withdrew from that process, despite the fact that a consensus had almost been reached. Consequently, and also in the light of rapid advances in the field of science and technology with dual-use capabilities, the risk of biological agents being used as weapons has increased.

“In that context, the Russian Federation and China emphasize that the overseas military biological activities of the United States and its allies — more than 200 United States biological laboratories are deployed outside its national territory and function in an opaque and non-transparent manner — cause serious concerns and questions among the international community over compliance with the BWC. The Russian Federation and China share the view that such activities pose serious risks for their national security and are detrimental to the security of relevant regions.

“The Russian Federation and China further note that the military biological activities of the United States and its allies on their national territory also cause serious compliance concerns. Given the fact that the United States and its allies do not provide any meaningful information on those military biological activities that could allay the concerns of the international community, the Russian Federation and China urge the United States and its allies to act in an open, transparent and responsible manner, by providing proper information on their military biological activities carried out overseas and on their national territory and supporting the resumption of negotiations on a legally binding protocol to the BWC, with an effective verification mechanism, so as to ensure their compliance with the BWC.

“In that context, the Russian Federation and China note the importance of improved confidence-building measures under the Convention, inter alia, by including information on the overseas military biological activities of the BWC States parties in reporting form. They believe that such a declaration would be conducive to filling in the blanks and fostering confidence among States parties.

“The Russian Federation and China also call upon the BWC States parties to continue their joint efforts to strengthen the Convention on a secure, legally binding basis. They welcome relevant initiatives. They also support the adoption of ancillary measures to improve the current implementation of the Convention.

“The BWC institutional framework would be strengthened by the creation of the proposed mobile biomedical teams to render assistance in cases of biological-weapons use, investigate such cases and help combat epidemics of various origins. That proposal represents a new approach to improved BWC implementation at the international level, combining the principles of collective security and cooperation for peaceful purposes.

“The Russian Federation and China stress that the rapid development of science and technology in BWC-related areas calls for greater attention on the part of the BWC States parties. There is a need to raise awareness about the risks associated with dual-use research and also to promote the full use of the latest advances in biotechnology for peaceful purposes. In that context, the Russian Federation and China support the idea of establishing a BWC scientific advisory committee to analyse the scientific and technological advances relevant to the Convention and advise its States parties accordingly.

“At the ninth BWC Review Conference, the Russian Federation and China are prepared to consider any proposals for strengthening the Convention and improving its implementation in a non-discriminatory manner. They call upon all BWC States parties to adopt a constructive approach to ensure that the decisions taken serve to strengthen the BWC regime”.

That is the full text of the joint statement of the Chinese and Russian Foreign Ministers on

strengthening the BWC. China and Russia request that it be distributed as a General Assembly document. The two countries stand ready to work with the international community to promote genuine multilateralism, while strengthening the authority and effectiveness of the BWC, safeguarding the multilateral arms-control and disarmament regime and maintaining international peace and security.

Mr. Papakostas (Greece): Let me first congratulate the Bureau and you, Mr. Chair, for assuming the responsibility of coordinating First Committee deliberations during these unprecedented times, and wish you every success.

Greece fully aligns itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union (see A/C.1/76/PV.2). We would also like to contribute a few additional remarks in our national capacity.

The disarmament, non-proliferation and arms-control edifice is under duress, and collective efforts are urgently needed, especially in the light of the hurdles created by the coronavirus disease pandemic and destabilizing geopolitical challenges. Multilateralism, with the United Nations at its core, has been the foundation of arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation negotiations. The First Committee is the competent forum in which the breadth and scope of those critical issues are assessed annually in a continuous effort to construct the security environment.

Greece is a strong proponent of the United Nations institutions and treaties that make up the arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation architecture and an advocate of preserving and transforming that edifice with a robust step-by-step process, based on the principles of international law and international humanitarian law.

With regard to nuclear disarmament, we look forward to the deliberations of the tenth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), scheduled to be held in January 2022. The balanced approach of the Treaty's three related pillars constitutes the foundation for deliberations on nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. From our perspective, continuing support for the NPT translates into trust that in the future we can aim for a world without nuclear weapons, with mechanisms that ensure unequivocal verification of that achievement.

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), which is entrusted with key verification responsibilities, is called upon to play a pivotal role at a critical juncture not only for the NPT, based on article III safeguards, but also for the global non-proliferation architecture that it supports, especially the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, which we hope will regain its momentum. More generally, Greece assigns high importance to the stringent implementation of IAEA safety standards and nuclear security guidance documents. Transparency and compliance with the results of relevant reports can only contribute to bolstering regional and international confidence-building measures.

With regard to nuclear disarmament, Greece remains committed to a step-by-step approach that will be effective, verifiable and irreversible. A fissile material cut-off treaty, coupled with the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, would constitute the best way forward in that process.

The upcoming Review Conference of the States parties to the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC) in 2022 constitutes a litmus test for the future of international cooperation and the continuing relevance of international disarmament treaties. Although the norm against the use of biological weapons remains strong and preserved, strengthening the capacity of the BTWC, as well as its adaptation to the current developments in the area of life sciences, will enhance the Treaty's long-standing relevance and place it once again at the centre of global deliberations on weapons of mass destruction.

Despite the hurdles posed by pandemic restrictions and rising geopolitical instability, we must do our utmost to address the growing challenges in the disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control realm. Challenging times require innovative working methods, persistence and perseverance. We are confident that, with your guidance, Mr. Chair, the First Committee will rise to the challenge of a more secure global environment.

Ms. Al-Thani (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Mr. Chair, as well as the other members of the Bureau on your elections. I wish you every success in your task.

My country's delegation aligns itself with the statements made on behalf of the Group of Arab States and the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/76/PV.2).

The State of Qatar stresses the importance of adhering to all conventions and treaties on nuclear disarmament and weapons of mass destruction so that we can achieve the goal of building a world free of threats to humankind. We look forward to all States joining those conventions in order to maintain peace and security for future generations and protect ecosystems from the risk of the spread of such weapons.

The reduced proliferation of weapons directly contributes to directing resources towards addressing the spread of the coronavirus disease, promoting relief efforts and sustainable development in local communities and providing greater assistance for emergencies and sustainable development in those communities. In that regard, the Secretary-General's appeal for achieving a global ceasefire and addressing the coronavirus disease remains of great importance. The State of Qatar calls for a positive and immediate response to that appeal.

The fact that the Middle East is not yet free from nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction remains a concern for all States in the region. My country's delegation expresses its concern about the lack of progress on the issue.

We are also concerned about the non-implementation of the commitments made at the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the measures adopted by the 2000 NPT Review Conference, as well as the 2010 NPT Action Plan, in addition to the failure of the 2015 NPT Review Conference.

In that regard, the State of Qatar reiterates its support for the second session of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction, which will be held in the last quarter of this year. We look forward to the cooperation of all States in the region to fulfil the purpose of the Conference in the interests of their peoples while strengthening international peace and security.

As part of the efforts of the State of Qatar and its contribution to realizing international peace and security, we seek to ensure that we accede to international disarmament conventions and treaties and actively participate in activities and meetings of United Nations disarmament bodies. To that end, the State of Qatar joined the Convention on Nuclear Safety on 14 December 2020 and deposited its accession

document at the International Atomic Energy Agency, which serves to emphasize our adherence to nuclear safety and security standards.

In conclusion, the State of Qatar reiterates its full commitment to honouring its obligations as a State party to international instruments on disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation so as to achieve regional and international peace and security.

Mr. Kelly (Ireland): Ireland aligns itself with the statement made by the observer of the European Union (see A/C.1/76/PV.2) and the statement to be delivered on behalf of the New Agenda Coalition.

I would like to congratulate you, Mr. Chair, on assuming the Chair and assure you of Ireland's support. I thank you for your management of the First Committee's work in these challenging circumstances and encourage you to maximize the opportunities for civil society participation, despite the constraints.

Serious threats to international peace and security persist, including civilian harm in urban conflict, the modernization and expansion of nuclear arsenals, the proliferation of missile technology, malicious cyberactivity, tensions in outer space and challenges to international humanitarian law. The only way to address those global threats is through collective action, with the United Nations central to that work.

We know that no State or international organization could address adequately the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of a nuclear-weapon detonation, which underscores the urgency of their elimination. The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) remains the cornerstone of the disarmament and non-proliferation regime. Ireland expects tangible progress at the NPT Review Conference, particularly on the disarmament pillar, for which progress has been unacceptably slow. Article VI and past consensus outcomes provide a framework for achieving a world without nuclear weapons; their implementation is long overdue.

Rather than impeding progress on disarmament, as some claim, today's global security challenges reinforce the need for immediate action. A vision of a more peaceful and secure world led Ireland and a large majority of States to adopt the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) in 2017. For many States, it acts as a practical expression of article VI of the NPT. Ireland is preparing for the meeting of States parties

to the TPNW, and we look forward to advancing its landmark provisions.

Ireland was pleased to convene a Security Council briefing recently to mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) (see S/PV.8865). Ireland calls individually on the remaining annex 2 States to sign and ratify the CTBT immediately.

To reinforce the non-proliferation pillar, the NPT Review Conference will provide a timely opportunity to reaffirm the importance of universal adherence to the safeguards of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the universalization of the additional protocol.

We are pleased to serve as Security Council facilitator on resolution 2231 (2015). Ireland strongly supports the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action and urges all sides to return to Vienna to conclude talks. We deeply regret Iran's accelerated steps away from compliance. Full cooperation with the IAEA is essential for the international community's confidence in the exclusively peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear programme.

The ongoing nuclear and ballistic missile-related activities of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea represent a serious threat. We call on the country to immediately end its destabilizing actions and take concrete steps to abandon its missile, weapons of mass destruction and nuclear programmes in a complete, verifiable and irreversible manner.

Addressing the wide-ranging effects of the use of explosive weapons in populated areas is a top priority for Ireland. We are proud to lead the consultations process to agree a political declaration on that issue, which we intend to conclude in early 2022.

Ireland is unequivocal in its enduring support for the comprehensive prohibitions against anti-personnel mines and cluster munitions. At the Review Conference of the States Parties to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects, Ireland will support the universalization of the Convention and its Protocols and work to ensure that it remains responsive to emerging challenges.

We are also concerned about the considerable ethical, moral and legal dilemmas posed by the development of autonomous weapons systems.

As we approach 25 years since the Chemical Weapons Convention entered into force, Ireland will do all it can to uphold the prohibition on chemical weapons and strengthen the Treaty. Impunity is unacceptable.

Throughout all this work, gender equality and consideration of the gendered impacts of weapons have been long-standing priorities for Ireland. We are proud to co-chair the International Gender Champions Disarmament Impact Group, and we are encouraged by the increasing number of resolutions that include gender considerations. We must ensure that the Committee is truly representative and addresses its work inclusively and comprehensively.

Ms. Brandt (Netherlands): Let me start by congratulating you, Mr. Chair, on your election as Chair of the First Committee, as well as the other members of the Bureau on the assumption of their positions. The delegation of the Netherlands stands ready to support your work.

We live in a world that is increasingly multipolar, in which we see new and disruptive technologies emerging all the time. Those developments, as well as the far-reaching impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19), challenge global security and the non-proliferation and disarmament architecture. The Netherlands remains strongly committed to further strengthening and implementing the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), which is the cornerstone of the global non-proliferation and disarmament regime.

As Vice-President of the NPT Review Conference and Chair of Main Committee III, on the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, we will work hard towards the successful outcome of the Conference. The non-proliferation and disarmament initiative, for which we have assumed the coordination responsibility for the coming two years, as well as initiatives such as the International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmaments Verification and the Stockholm Initiative, can contribute to the success of the Conference.

The Netherlands is deeply concerned about the escalatory steps taken by Iran. We call upon Iran to refrain from taking more of those steps, reverse those

steps that are inconsistent with the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action and resume the negotiations.

In addition, diplomatic efforts to address the proliferation challenges posed by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea must be actively supported. We cannot accept a nuclear Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

The Chemical Weapons Convention has achieved results of which the global community can be truly proud. Nevertheless, we cannot sit back and be complacent. Over the past few years, the world has seen the re-emergence of the use of chemical weapons, posing an urgent threat to international peace and security. It is therefore of the utmost importance that Member States live up to their responsibility to protect the integrity of the Convention and fully support the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons.

Biotechnological advancements continue to be made, and the COVID-19 crisis has shown us the global risks of biological threats. The Netherlands is committed to the strengthening and implementation of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention during the Review Conference of the States Parties to that Convention to be held in 2022.

In the light of rapid developments in technology, one cannot overemphasize the importance of the responsible use of those technologies. The Netherlands calls for safeguarding and reinforcing existing international frameworks. An open, free, safe, secure and interoperable cyberspace is essential for the world today. We therefore welcome the consensus reports of the Open-ended Working Group and the Group of Governmental Experts on Developments in the field of Information and Telecommunications in the Context of International Security.

The increasing number of intentional threats that come with new approaches towards the outer space domain is deeply worrisome. International cooperation on the issue of space security is therefore crucial.

The Netherlands also reiterates the essential role of multilateralism concerning lethal autonomous weapons systems. The Group of Governmental Experts on Emerging Technologies in the Area of Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems should adopt substantive recommendations for the consideration of the sixth Review Conference of the Chemical Weapons Convention, which provides an important opportunity

to review the implementation of the Convention and take steps to strengthen it.

As a long-term supporter of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention and mine action, as well as in our capacity as President of that Convention this year, we call on all States not yet party to accede to it.

Finally, we are pleased with the outcome of the second Review Conference of the Convention on Cluster Munitions, held last month. The Lausanne Action Plan and Political Declaration provide clear guidance for our common work to strengthen adherence to and implementation of the Convention.

In conclusion, the Netherlands remains a steadfast supporter of multilateral cooperation to effectively tackle the challenges that lie before us.

Mr. Tun (Myanmar): At the outset, allow me to extend my warmest congratulations to you, Mr. Chair, and the other members of the Bureau on your elections. I assure you of my delegation's full support and cooperation for the fruitful outcome of this session of the First Committee.

Within the past two years, a number of common goals we all share, including those of the First Committee, have been subject to regression as a result of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19). That trend still continues in many parts of the world. As the Charter of the United Nations rightly calls for, the least diversion for armaments of the world's human and economic resources is one of the remedial measures we urgently need, not only to compensate for COVID-19-induced losses but also to make the world a better place. We need to redouble our efforts to drive disarmament and non-proliferation forward.

We must not overlook the existence of nuclear weapons and their deployment and the threats that they imply. Nuclear threats are the most serious security challenge, risking the existence of humankind. Therefore, the total elimination of nuclear weapons is the only absolute guarantee against their use or threat of use.

The entry into force of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) on 22 January constitutes welcome progress and a crucial achievement for the nuclear disarmament agenda. We believe that it will contribute to freeing the world of nuclear weapons. Myanmar signed the TPNW in September 2018 and had planned to ratify it this year. That ratification, sadly,

is no longer possible with the naked power-grab and illegal coup by the brutal military. Nevertheless, that should not generate any doubt over our commitments to promoting nuclear disarmament. We sincerely wish to ratify the Treaty as soon as possible, with proper endorsement by the duly elected representatives of the people of Myanmar.

The annual draft resolution entitled “Nuclear disarmament” has been proposed by Myanmar and like-minded countries since 1995, with overwhelming support from many Member States. It calls for practical and tangible measures to be taken by both nuclear haves and have-nots on our path towards nuclear disarmament. In line with our strong dedication and commitment to that noble ambition, we will once again propose the draft resolution at this session (A/C.1/76/L.39). We would like to reiterate our sincere appreciation to Member States for their co-sponsorship and support in previous years and request all delegations to continue their support for this year’s draft resolution.

As a ratifying party to the Chemical Weapons Convention since July 2015, during previous years the civilian Government of Myanmar was actively engaged in complying with its obligations pursuant to the Convention, despite minimal cooperation and a lack of transparency by the military. Recently, and with credible evidence, it was brought to the attention of the civilian Government that Myanmar had failed to declare a decommissioned chemical-production facility controlled by the military that had developed a schedule 1 chemical in the past. I regret to say that efforts to address that shortcoming have been suspended due to the prevailing political crisis in Myanmar.

Most human suffering associated with conventional weapons is rooted in their irresponsible use by people in power. The power of indiscriminate killing is also rooted in the proliferation of conventional weapons among actors who do not hesitate to abuse them for their narrow interests. That is exactly what the people of Myanmar are experiencing right now. The military brass has for a long time been known to commit atrocities with impunity against the people whom they are meant to protect, using semi-automatic assault rifles, artillery, air strikes and other types of portable arms. I sincerely appeal to those countries that sell arms, ammunition and associated technologies to the Myanmar military to revisit their decisions to do so, as that will save many innocent lives.

Ms. Juul (Norway): We congratulate you, Mr. Chair, on your election and look forward to working closely with you during this session.

Norway is committed to the goal of the total elimination of nuclear weapons. The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is the cornerstone of our common effort on nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and peaceful use, and we urge all States parties to work towards a successful outcome to the tenth Review Conference. As a member of the Stockholm Initiative on Nuclear Disarmament, we are pleased by the growing number of alignments to its recommendations on the part of NPT States parties.

Nuclear disarmament verification enables future progress on nuclear disarmament. We are encouraged that work in that regard is gaining momentum and look forward to the upcoming meeting of the Group of Governmental Experts on that issue.

We also welcome the decision by Russia and the United States to extend the New START Treaty and resume the strategic stability dialogue.

Norway advocates the rapid entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and the conclusion of a fissile material cut-off treaty. The comprehensive safeguards agreements and the additional protocols constitute the global verification standard. They enable the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to monitor and report on compliance with NPT obligations.

Norway is gravely concerned by the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea’s stated intention and efforts to develop weapons of mass destruction. We urge the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea to abandon its nuclear and ballistic programmes in a complete, verifiable and irreversible manner and recommit to meaningful negotiations.

In addition, Iran’s lack of cooperation seriously affects the IAEA’s ability to provide assurance of the exclusively peaceful nature of its nuclear programme. Ongoing research and the development of enrichment and other capabilities have irreversible consequences. We urge Iran to return to full compliance with the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action and cooperate fully with the IAEA on all safeguards obligations.

Norway is appalled by the recurrent use of chemical weapons. Any breach of the global prohibition is unacceptable. We regret that the Russian Federation

has not thoroughly or transparently investigated the assassination attempt on Alexei Navalny. We also remain deeply concerned by the continued failure by the Syrian Arab Republic to close the outstanding issues from its initial declaration on its chemical weapons programme. Norway reiterates its full support for the Technical Secretariat of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and its Director-General.

Cyberspace is increasingly becoming an arena for conflict. Malicious cyberoperations by State and non-State actors have increased in scope, scale, severity and sophistication, yet the consensus reports of the Open-ended Working Group on Developments in the Field of Information and Telecommunications in the Context of International Security and the Group of Governmental Experts on Advancing Responsible State Behaviour in Cyberspace in the Context of International Security demonstrate the commitment of all United Nations States Members to uphold the international rules-based order in cyberspace.

Norway remains committed to preventing an arms race in outer space and maintaining outer space as a peaceful, stable, secure and sustainable environment that is accessible to all. We therefore support the establishment of an open-ended working group on responsible State behaviour, as proposed by the United Kingdom.

The Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention has been hugely successful; however, there is a worrisome increase in the use of improvised landmines. The Lausanne Action Plan of the Convention on Cluster Munitions serves as an excellent guide for our work in the next review cycle.

Norway continues to support efforts to ensure the effective implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty and strongly supports the universalization of the International Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation, as it contributes to transparency and confidence-building.

Finally, we underline the importance of including a gender perspective in all arms control efforts and support the further integration of the women and peace and security agenda in that field.

Mrs. Baeriswyl (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the Swiss delegation, allow me to congratulate you, Mr. Chair, on your election as Chair

of the First Committee. We look forward to continuing our excellent collaboration.

International security is in constant flux and faces many challenges. Competition among the major Powers has intensified, and global arms spending has reached its highest level in decades. New types of weapons pose the risk of a technological arms race. Taking stock of those developments, many States are reviewing their security and defence policies. However, we also need to redouble efforts to promote peace and stability.

Against that background, Switzerland is developing its first arms-control strategy for the period 2022 to 2025. As a Security Council candidate for the 2023 to 2024 term, that strategy will also guide our engagement towards international security and disarmament in that organ.

Allow me to underline three key considerations in that regard.

First, promoting stability and reducing risks must be at the centre of our efforts. We are faced with the deterioration of the international security environment, the potential new destabilizing effects of technological developments and a weakening of the arms control architecture. For those reasons, our strategy focuses on new measures for strategic stability, such as nuclear risk reduction. Switzerland, in the framework of the Stockholm Initiative on Nuclear Disarmament, has proposed a nuclear risk-reduction package for the upcoming Review Conference of the States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). We hope for tangible progress at, and beyond, the Review Conference.

In that context, we welcome the fact that the United States and Russia have extended the New START Treaty and launched a strategic stability dialogue. We hope that dialogue will lead to concrete results and form the basis for future negotiations on arms control agreements.

Secondly, maintaining and strengthening the rules-based international order is an urgent task. Respect for international law is essential for global stability. Existing instruments and norms must be maintained, fully implemented and complied with, and universalized where necessary. In that context, the upcoming NPT Review Conference should reaffirm previous commitments and take decisions to advance their implementation.

Similarly, in order to preserve the non-proliferation benefits of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), a rapid return to its full implementation by all parties is essential, including the provisional application of the additional protocol to the comprehensive safeguards agreement, the application of all transparency measures under the JCPOA and an immediate resumption of full and constructive cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency.

International law has a key role to play in responding to new conflict realities and technological developments. New challenges must be identified and, where necessary, principles must be established and norms developed. I refer in particular to lethal autonomous weapons systems, for which rules and measures are required to ensure human control and avoid systems that cannot be used in accordance with international law. Another example concerns measures to ensure that international humanitarian law is fully respected when explosive weapons are used in populated areas.

In the area of outer space, we welcome the proposal to establish an open-ended working group on responsible behaviour.

In the cyber domain, we must build on the existing normative framework reaffirmed and developed by the Group of Governmental Experts on Advancing Responsible State Behaviour in Cyberspace in the Context of International Security and the Open-ended Working Group on Developments in the Field of Information and Telecommunications in the Context of International Security. The implementation of that framework is a priority.

Finally, functioning processes and effective partnerships are vital to ensure the implementation of existing norms and, where necessary, to develop new ones. We need a functioning disarmament machinery. All too often, our disarmament machinery procedures are politicized, preventing us from taking collective and preventive action. We need to develop forward-looking solutions with all key actors, including civil society, academia and, where appropriate, industry.

Mr. Francis (Trinidad and Tobago): At the outset, Trinidad and Tobago aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) (see A/C.1/76/PV.2).

Permit me to congratulate you, Mr. Chair, and the other members of the Bureau on your elections and to assure you of my delegation's full support and cooperation.

Trinidad and Tobago has noted, with much concern, the modernization and acceleration of the accumulation of nuclear and other arsenals by some States. An unchecked nuclear arms race could potentially, either through miscalculation or premeditation, put the world on a certain path to catastrophic human and environmental consequences. The evidence suggests that, contrary to conventional wisdom, deterrence in fact breeds escalation. We remain convinced that the total elimination of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction offers the only effective guarantee of international peace and security.

As part of a region that established the first nuclear-weapon-free zone, Trinidad and Tobago has demonstrated a long-standing commitment to the global non-proliferation regime. Along with the international community, we welcomed the entry into force of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons earlier this year, and we look forward to the first meeting of States parties, to be held in 2022.

Despite ongoing concerted efforts to eradicate the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, Trinidad and Tobago, like many other countries, continues to experience the deleterious effects of the diversion of those small arms and light weapons, which pose a significant threat to social stability and sustainable development.

In addition to the rule of law, Trinidad and Tobago relies on the strict observance by all States of the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and other international treaties and agreements to guarantee our right to a sovereign, secure and peaceful existence.

We therefore remain fully committed to the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in all Its Aspects, the International Tracing Instrument and the Arms Trade Treaty. As a member of CARICOM, Trinidad and Tobago actively participated in the seventh Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action, held earlier this year, and looks forward to the convening of the eighth Biennial Meeting, in 2022.

While recognizing the constructive role of information and communications technology as an enabler of development, Trinidad and Tobago is cognizant that such technology lends itself to malicious misuse by hostile actors, including criminal and terrorist organizations. Consequently, our Government has placed emphasis on adopting strategies to reduce the nation's vulnerability. Mindful of the need for international cooperation in order to minimize that threat, Trinidad and Tobago keenly followed the deliberations of the Open-Ended Working Group on Developments in the Field of Information and Telecommunications in the Context of International Security, which concluded its work earlier this year. We look forward to the convening of the new Open-Ended Working Group later this year.

Given that conceptually we all share the common objective of achieving lasting international peace and security, then conceptually we must all contribute to making it a reality. In that regard, the role of women goes well beyond recognizing them as victims but must also include acknowledging their actual and potential contribution to the process. Our Government therefore reaffirms its commitment to the fulsome engagement of women at all levels in all aspects of disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control and will continue to robustly support international and regional initiatives to that end.

In conclusion, Trinidad and Tobago reiterates its gratitude for the continuing assistance offered by the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean. We look forward to continued collaboration to advance the goals of disarmament and non-proliferation.

Ms. Bartolini (San Marino): I would like to congratulate you, Mr. Chair, on your election and wish you a productive session.

Despite our struggle against the pandemic and an unprecedented economic crisis and the need to invest in health, economic, social and environmental programmes, the world's military expenditure continues to rise. In the meantime, long and complex conflicts have not stopped, bringing even greater instability to all regions.

The Republic of San Marino is very concerned by the erosion of the disarmament and non-proliferation architecture, in particular due to the risks of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, including

nuclear weapons. With rapid technological advances, nuclear arsenals are being modernized and new delivery systems are being developed. In the meantime, the risks of escalation and miscalculation are increasing. That is extremely worrisome if we think about the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of an eventual detonation. It is therefore critical that we all firmly recommit to advancing our nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation agenda.

San Marino would like to reiterate its support for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). We are deeply concerned that, 25 years after the CTBT opened for signature, the prospect of its entry into force is still unclear. We urge the remaining States whose ratification is necessary for the entry into force of the CTBT to sign and ratify it without further delay.

San Marino looks forward to participating in the Review Conference of States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons next year and working towards a successful outcome document. The Review Conference will be an opportunity for all States parties to work together in good faith for our collective security.

San Marino welcomes the extension of the New START Treaty between the United States and the Russian Federation and the ongoing bilateral dialogue on future arms control.

The entry into force of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons represents a historic milestone. San Marino is thrilled by the great number of countries that have already signed and ratified that instrument in such a short period of time. It proves that the majority of countries support a total ban on nuclear weapons. We strongly encourage other countries to join that instrument and look forward to participating in the first meeting of States parties next year.

My country has always stood against any weapon of mass destruction, the use of which would have unspeakable consequences for humankind. San Marino is seriously worried by cases of the use of chemical weapons. We firmly condemn such horrific acts, which pose a significant challenge to the international norm against chemical weapons. The use of chemical or biological weapons by anyone, at any time and under any circumstances is simply unacceptable, and those responsible should be held to account.

The use of explosive weapons in populated areas has a devastating and indiscriminate impact on civilians. San Marino calls on all parties to refrain from the use of those weapons in such areas and to fully comply with international humanitarian law. In that regard, San Marino fully supports the adoption of an international political declaration on the topic.

The improper use of cyberspace is also of great concern. Cybercrime is one of the fastest developing threats to international security. Malicious digital operations can disrupt vital infrastructure and can be used to spread misinformation or control or repress human rights. It is therefore critical to support responsible State behaviour in cyberspace so that the rule of law, human rights and fundamental freedoms are respected there.

Finally, the proliferation of armed drones and autonomous weapons are creating ethical and legal concerns. We believe that broader multilateral reflection should be undertaken in those fields.

We now have the chance to build back better and take significant steps forward in the sphere of disarmament and non-proliferation. Let us not waste that chance to reach our common goals and build a more secure future for all.

Ms. Alvarado (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of Peru, allow me to congratulate you, Mr. Chair, and the other members of the Bureau on your elections to lead the work of the First Committee. We are confident that, under your wise leadership, our efforts will be successful. You have my delegation's full support.

We are currently immersed in a climate of uncertainty, in which hotbeds of conflict and threats to international peace and security persist and have been further exacerbated by the global health crisis.

However, in the face of that discouraging scenario, new constructive processes have emerged such as the entry into force of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which constitutes a historic event and marks a legal and moral starting point for achieving nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. With respect to that instrument, to which Peru is a signatory, although nuclear weapons are explicitly prohibited its use and effectiveness will be feasible only when the nuclear Powers are party to it.

In an unstable world in which nuclear weapons are once again a threat to peace, regional cooperation to

establish nuclear-weapon-free zones is essential. Our region was a pioneer in the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone through the Treaty of Tlatelolco, which has served as an inspiration to others. In that connection, Peru supports the establishment in the Middle East of a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction.

Ensuring the stability of maritime communication routes is also essential to international peace and security. Securing our oceans in general is crucial because they are the transit zone for more than 90 per cent of global trade in goods and 95 per cent of Internet traffic, especially given the emergence of new threats and criminal activities that require our urgent attention.

Most of today's threats to peace and security arise mainly between States in the same regions. In that regard, the effective control of conventional arms, in particular small arms and light weapons and their ammunition, must be conducted principally in the regional and subregional contexts. Latin America and the Caribbean is one of the regions that suffers most from the humanitarian and socioeconomic consequences of the illicit trafficking of such weapons to unauthorized recipients, who are often linked to organized and common crime.

In that connection, we are committed to the full 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 order to combat this scourge, as well as the International Tracing Instrument. We have also established border cooperation mechanisms in that regard. We consider it necessary to adopt a legally binding instrument on the issue and to strengthen cooperation, international assistance and national capacity-building to that end.

The use of information and communications technology has implications for international security due to both their rapid evolution and the dangers that can arise from their misuse. We believe that it is necessary to regulate the matter through a legally binding instrument that will enable us to establish a secure and peaceful cyberspace. We welcome the forthcoming work of the new Open-ended Working Group on Developments in the Field of Information and Telecommunications in the Context of International Security.

We acknowledge the interdependent relation linking peace, security and development. In that regard, it is critical to strike a balance between resources allocated

to military spending and development. It is hard to believe that in 2020 in the throes of the coronavirus disease pandemic, global military expenditures totalled nearly \$2 trillion — 2.6 per cent more than in 2019. It is incumbent upon us to adopt measures for the effective regulation of armaments that will be conducive to the fulfilment of target 16.4 of the Sustainable Development Goals.

I would also like to take this opportunity to highlight the important work carried out by the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, the headquarters of which are located in my country — in particular its support for 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, the International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons and the Arms Trade Treaty, as well as training and technical assistance in the identification of weapons to facilitate their interception and prevent their diversion at the national and binational levels.

For Peru, multilateralism, international law and above all political will are the best tools for ensuring disarmament and international security. We will work to that end within the framework of the First Committee.

Mr. Gusman (Azerbaijan): We congratulate you, Mr. Chair, and the other members of the Bureau on your elections and pledge our full support and cooperation.

Azerbaijan aligns itself with the statement made by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/76/PV.2) and wishes to make the following remarks in its national capacity.

Nuclear disarmament is a crucial element of global efforts to strengthen peace and security. Azerbaijan supports all multilateral efforts to achieve nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation in order to make the world free of nuclear weapons and dangers. As one of the States parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), Azerbaijan remains committed to that cornerstone instrument and supports the implementation of all its three pillars in an effective, balanced and equitable manner. Nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament are mutually reinforcing and complementary to one another, thereby enhancing cooperation in the area of

the peaceful use of nuclear energy. We look forward to the tenth NPT Review Conference and count on its successful outcome.

The primary purpose of conventional arms control and confidence- and security-building measures is to sustain peace and stability, giving effect to norms and principles of international law, in particular those related to respect for sovereignty, territorial integrity and the inviolability of international borders. Strict adherence to those principles, together with the implementation of politico-military commitments under relevant regional security arrangements, could enhance predictability and transparency and avoid the aggravation of threat perception.

In response to yet another act of aggression by Armenia with the involvement of mercenaries and foreign terrorist fighters, Azerbaijan undertook and successfully accomplished a counter-offensive operation on 27 September 2020, exercising its inherent right to self-defence in line with Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations and restoring its sovereignty and territorial integrity.

The intentional, indiscriminate and disproportionate use of military force by Armenia against densely populated Azerbaijani cities far outside the conflict zone, including a series of ruthless night-time missile strikes on residential areas, resulted in the killing of 101 Azerbaijani civilians, including 12 children. More than 400 civilians were wounded. Some 84,000 people were forced to leave their homes and almost 5,000 private houses, apartment buildings and other civilian objects were either destroyed or damaged.

Azerbaijan has consistently warned about Armenia's military build-up in the formerly occupied territories, the deployment of Armenia's armed forces and a large quantity of undeclared and uncontrolled armaments and military equipment, in violation of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe and the Vienna Document. Military equipment in excess of \$5 billion belonging to the armed forces of Armenia that was destroyed or captured as trophies of war has clearly exposed Armenia's long-standing illegal practice, as well as its stubborn denial not only of its role as an aggressor and occupier but even as a party to the conflict.

Despite the cessation of hostilities, mines planted by Armenia on a massive scale in the formerly occupied territories of Azerbaijan continue to claim the lives of

innocent civilians and threaten to kill more. As of today, 30 Azerbaijani citizens, including two journalists, have been killed and about 130 citizens have been wounded. That threat can be mitigated through the release by Armenia of all maps of minefields in compliance with international humanitarian law.

The trilateral statements of 10 November 2020 and 11 January 2021, signed by the leaders of Azerbaijan, Armenia and the Russian Federation, created a unique opportunity to build lasting peace and security in the South Caucasus, based on the fundamental norms and principles of international law after three decades of conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia.

The Government of Azerbaijan has prioritized the rehabilitation and reconstruction of the liberated territories and the restoration of housing, essential services, transportation and communication links to ensure the safe return of the displaced population and the achievement of high standards of living. Azerbaijan has repeatedly expressed its readiness for the normalization of inter-State relations with Armenia, based on the mutual recognition of and respect for one another's sovereignty and territorial integrity within the internationally recognized borders, and expects reciprocity on the part of Armenia.

Mr. Milanović (Bosnia and Herzegovina), Vice-Chair, took the Chair

Mr. Nyamid (Cameroon) (*spoke in French*): I would like to join the previous speakers in congratulating the Chair, and through him the other members of the Bureau, on their elections to direct the work of the First Committee. I assure them of the support and cooperation of my delegation in carrying out their tasks.

My delegation reaffirms that disarmament is an instrument of conflict prevention. Its implementation is one of the objectives that led to the founding of the United Nations. By pursuing that mission with resolve, the United Nations will be able to affirm its dynamic role in the maintenance of international peace and security and shared development, which was advocated by the founders.

Cameroon remains firmly committed to disarmament, which it considers to be a key element of broader efforts to strengthen international peace and security. For my country, disarmament must move forward while any new arms race must be avoided in order to strengthen security for all.

My delegation would like to see work on the establishment of new nuclear-weapon-free zones continue with the broadest possible participation. It reaffirms its desire to see non-proliferation remain on the agenda of the United Nations bodies responsible for disarmament issues.

Furthermore, the progress achieved at the meetings of the Nuclear Security Summit, the fourth 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, the extension of the New START Treaty, on the reduction and limitation of strategic offensive weapons, and the adoption of the Arms Trade Treaty demonstrate that we can advance the disarmament and non-proliferation agenda when a constructive and pragmatic spirit prevails.

However, the absence of a balance between nuclear disarmament and credible disarmament in all other areas — whether biological, chemical or conventional weapons, missile defence or outer space — could once again lead to a destabilizing arms race.

My country reaffirms its commitment to the cause of peace, which is why it advocates for establishing a general and complete disarmament treaty under effective international control. Cameroon has ratified the main instruments that constitute the foundation of the international regime on non-proliferation and nuclear security.

Cameroon is convinced that the establishment of internationally recognized nuclear-weapon-free zones, based on arrangements freely arrived at among the States and regions concerned, following the example of the Treaty of Pelindaba on the prohibition of nuclear weapons in Africa, would consolidate regional peace and security, strengthen the non-proliferation regime and contribute to the realization of the objectives of nuclear disarmament.

Cameroon believes that there is a link between disarmament and development. Despite ample evidence that the excessive accumulation of weapons diverts needed resources from development and fuels armed conflict and violence and leads to death, suffering, social inequality and environmental degradation, the arms race continues unabated and remains a major concern of the international community. As a result, the failure to establish effective disarmament and arms control systems has disastrous consequences for

socioeconomic development, the achievement of peace and security and the well-being of all. Cameroon calls for respect for the provisions of Article 26 of the Charter of the United Nations, which recognizes disarmament as a precondition for development. We must therefore work for the maintenance of international peace and security and avoid diverting the world's economic and human resources as much as possible.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide a unique opportunity to reconsider the historical relationship between disarmament and development. There is a strong link between disarmament and the achievement of the SDGs, in particular Goal 8, on promoting decent work and economic growth. Studies by the United Nations have shown that excessive military spending has a negative impact on economic growth.

Cameroon firmly believes that investment in disarmament and arms control is a direct long-term investment in peace, security and, consequently, sustainable development. Acknowledging that fact on a larger scale will help make the world safer, more prosperous and better prepared to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century.

Mr. Hikmat (Tajikistan): At the outset, I would like to congratulate the Chair and the other members of the Bureau on their elections and to reiterate my delegation's full support for them throughout the session.

Strengthening multilateral arms control mechanisms, disarmament and non-proliferation is key to maintaining global security and stability. The establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones is an essential component of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, while expanding cooperation on the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and strengthening regional and international peace and security. Tajikistan attaches great importance to further strengthening the disarmament and non-proliferation regimes and the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones.

To that end, Tajikistan was among the five countries of Central Asia that created a zone free of nuclear weapons in the region. We are convinced that the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones is essential to promote nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation, peace and security at the regional and global levels.

In that regard, we believe that the Treaty on a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Central Asia is consistent

with the efforts of the countries of the region to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons and promote regional security, cooperation among States and the peaceful use of nuclear energy. We encourage other States and regions to follow the example of our region. Therefore, we welcome the forthcoming Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction, which will be presided over by Kuwait.

The threat of nuclear proliferation remains a serious cause for concern. Accordingly, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) undoubtedly remains a cornerstone of the international security architecture and the global non-proliferation regime. The failure to achieve the universality of the NPT significantly erodes the integrity of the disarmament regime.

Therefore, we believe that the upcoming NPT Review Conference will provide an excellent opportunity to reiterate our commitment to the implementation of that landmark international Treaty. Tajikistan shares the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons and believes that no nuclear disarmament mechanism can be effective without the accession of all the parties concerned. In that regard, we call for the implementation of the provisions of the NPT and the speedy enforcement of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

We attach great importance to the efficient implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. We actively call for a Central Asia free from the threat of mines and strengthening cooperation in the area of humanitarian demining. Tajikistan supports the United Nations leading role in combating the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons (SALW) and considers it crucial to the implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in SALW in All Its Aspects, as a key multilateral mechanism to curb the proliferation of small arms and light weapons.

Information and communications technologies (ICTs) create huge opportunities for economic, political and social development, in particular for advancing progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals worldwide. We recognize the leading role of the United Nations in promoting dialogue among Member

States in that area. Tajikistan welcomes the launch of the negotiation process in the format of the Open-ended Working Group and the Group of Governmental Experts on Developments in the Field of Information and Telecommunications in the Context of International Security, aimed at providing an opportunity for all United Nations States Members to participate, express their views and extend cooperation on the international security dimensions of ICTs.

In conclusion, I would like to reaffirm Tajikistan's belief in the merits of multilateralism and the central role of the United Nations as the main universal platform for achieving consensus on key issues, in particular disarmament and international security.

Ms. Hill (Australia): I congratulate the Chair on his election. He has my delegation's full support.

This year, the international community confronts complex challenges in the pursuit of international peace, security and stability. In that environment, more than ever, it is critical that we continue to foster cooperation and dialogue and support an open, rules-based international system.

Australia remains steadfast in its pursuit of a world free of nuclear weapons and its support for pragmatic measures to achieve that. The Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons to be held in January 2022 will come at a critical juncture and is a vital opportunity to advance the Treaty's objectives. Australia welcomes the commencement of strategic stability talks between the United States and Russia, which will lay the groundwork for future arms control, disarmament and risk-reduction measures. China's engagement in such a dialogue will also be required in shaping a new era of arms control.

As a country that has experienced the consequences of nuclear testing, Australia welcomes the twenty-fifth anniversary of the adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). We remain determined to see the Treaty enter into force and urge all States that have yet to do so to ratify the Treaty. We encourage States to co-sponsor this year's CTBT draft resolution (A/C.1/76/L.49).

Together with others, Australia is deeply concerned about Iran's failure to credibly address the presence of nuclear material at undeclared locations and its decision not to implement the material aspects of its safeguards

obligations. We emphasize our strong support for the International Atomic Energy Agency as it seeks to implement safeguards in Iran.

Australia remains gravely concerned about the situation on the Korean peninsula. We continue to work to ensure the enforcement of United Nations sanctions on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and call on that country to take clear steps towards its complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization.

Those who use, enable, shield or order the use of chemical weapons must be brought to account. Australia welcomes the reports of the Investigation and Identification Team of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons on the use of chemical weapons in Syria. We call on Syria to comply fully with its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention.

The impacts of the coronavirus disease pandemic have focused attention on biological risks. We encourage States to work productively at the Review Conference of the Parties to the Biological Weapons Convention to be held in 2022.

The Chair returned to the Chair.

Australia is committed to upholding the international rules-based order in cyberspace. We welcome the universal commitment to a framework of responsible State behaviour and the progress of the Group of Governmental Experts in guiding the framework's implementation.

Australia is committed to the preservation of the space domain as a secure, safe and sustainable environment. In May, Australia was pleased to submit to the Secretary-General 10 principles for reducing space threats, and we encourage all States to engage in that discussion.

Australia values the work of the Group of Governmental Experts on lethal autonomous weapons systems. We look forward to a substantive outcome at the Sixth Review Conference of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons.

Australia continues to champion the full and effective participation of both women and men in international security forums and organizations. We were disappointed that the Conference on Disarmament was unable to reach consensus on a technical amendment to its rules of procedure to reflect the equality of

women and men. We remain committed to achieving that simple but significant change.

The Governments of Australia, the United States and the United Kingdom have announced an 18-month process of consultation to determine the best way forward for Australia to acquire conventionally armed, nuclear-powered submarines.

A core objective of the trilateral consultation process will be to identify parameters that reinforce Australia's exemplary non-proliferation credentials and the longstanding commitment of each of our Governments to the global nuclear non-proliferation regime. That will include engaging fully with the International Atomic Energy Agency over the next 18 months.

Australia will not shy away from the challenges posed by a rapidly evolving global environment. Meeting those challenges requires cooperation and a common purpose among all nations. We will continue to play a constructive role.

Mr. Al Zadjali (Oman) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to express my country's delegation's support for the statement made by the Permanent Representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, as well as the statement made by the Permanent Observer of Palestine on behalf of the Group of Arab States on disarmament and international security issues (see A/C.1/76/PV.2).

My country, the Sultanate of Oman, believes that friendly relations based on good-neighbourliness, non-interference in the internal affairs of States, the peaceful resolution of disputes, respect for the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and international law are the best way of strengthening security and stability regionally and internationally.

My country attaches utmost importance to international treaties on disarmament, including the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the Biological Weapons Convention, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and the Chemical Weapons Convention.

We believe that those treaties and their additional protocols, guarantees and resolutions, including resolutions relevant to the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons in the Middle East, constitute an integrated legal system for the non-proliferation regime. We must preserve them and not compromise or

fragment them, in order to ensure the universality and credibility of the non-proliferation regime.

The circumstances and challenges facing the world today, particularly in the Middle East, mean that we must renew our appeal to make the Middle East a zone free from nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction. We would like to draw the Committee's attention to what the Secretary-General said:

"The establishment of a zone free of nuclear and chemical weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East meets security requirements and puts an end once and for all to the possibility of nuclear conflict, and also provides tangible security benefits by giving assurances against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. It also gives further guarantees on the peaceful nuclear intentions of States of the region".

In that context, my country welcomes the convening of the first session of the United Nations Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction, chaired by the sisterly Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan in November 2019.

We reiterate our support for the efforts made by the sisterly State of Kuwait to hold the second session of the Conference at the end of this year. We look forward to the active participation of all States, particularly depositary States of the NPT, so we can increase the chances of success of the tenth Review Conference of the Parties to the NPT, to be held early in 2022.

While my country expresses its commitment to the NPT and its lofty goals, we wish also to reaffirm the legitimate right of States parties, without exception, to acquire nuclear materials, equipment and technology for peaceful purposes, in line with the provisions of the Treaty and within international criteria and International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards. We believe that any unilateral act of sabotage that falls outside the jurisdiction of the international community, as represented by the Security Council, against peaceful nuclear facilities in various States, regardless of its source, will not benefit security and stability but could have grave repercussions for the millions of people living in the region and beyond. We call on the international community to take practical and concrete steps to prevent such acts of aggression.

In conclusion, we would also underscore the fact that we are at a historic juncture in international relations. Solidarity, understanding and constructive cooperation are the way forward to move our world and peoples from insecurity to a new stage of cooperation and to build confidence so as to achieve a world free of threats, a world that focuses on realizing progress and harnesses sciences, technology and innovation for the good and well-being of all humankind.

Mr. Stefanile (Italy): I would like to start by wishing you, Mr. Chair, and the members of the Bureau a successful holding of this annual session of the First Committee and by assuring you of the full support of the Italian delegation.

Italy fully aligns itself with the statement made on behalf of the European Union (See A/C.1/76/PV.2) and wishes to add some remarks in its national capacity.

Effective multilateralism and a rules-based international system remain the only tools to preserve the results achieved in the field of international peace and security and to further advance the relevant processes. In that context, it is essential to act with determination to safeguard and to strengthen the international architecture on disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation.

Italy reaffirms its firm commitment to a peaceful and secure world free of nuclear weapons. The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), with its three mutually reinforcing pillars, remains the cornerstone of the international regime. It provides the only realistic legal framework to achieve a world without nuclear weapons in a way that promotes international stability and is based on the principle of undiminished security for all.

Only through an inclusive and progressive approach, in accordance with article VI of the NPT, can the goal of a nuclear-weapon-free world be achieved. Nuclear-weapon States bear fundamental responsibilities, and we encourage them to seek further reductions in their nuclear arsenals.

A main priority for Italy remains the prompt entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). As a staunch supporter of the CTBT, and in line with its role as article XIV co-coordinator for the upcoming two-year period, Italy urges all States that have not yet done so, in particular the remaining eight annex 2 States, to sign and ratify the Treaty without

further delay. In the meantime, we call upon all States to respect the moratorium on nuclear test explosions.

The immediate start of negotiations within the Conference on Disarmament on a treaty dealing with fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices is also of crucial importance. Pending the conclusion of such a treaty, all relevant States should abide by a moratorium on the production of fissile material.

We are gravely concerned by the Iranian disengagement from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action and urge Iran to implement its obligations under the Plan fully and without delay. We call on all participants in the Vienna talks to spare no effort in addressing and resolving the current issues through dialogue as soon as possible. At the same time, we urge Iran to provide the International Atomic Energy Agency with full and timely cooperation with respect to all its safeguard-related commitments.

The repeated ballistic missile launches, including the most recent ones, by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea undermine regional and international peace and security and are a matter of grave concern. We urge the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to refrain from further provocations and take concrete steps towards complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization. In the meantime, the international sanctions regime needs to remain in place and be effectively implemented.

Italy remains strongly committed to supporting the Chemical Weapons Convention and the work of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). We firmly condemn the use of chemical weapons by the Syrian air force and urge Syria to take all the measures required. Italy reiterates its concerns about the poisoning of Alexei Navalny in Russia with a chemical nerve agent of the Novichok group in August 2020 and urges the Russian Federation to transparently clarify responsibility for the incident and cooperate with the OPCW on the issue.

The coronavirus disease pandemic has shown how important it is to improve biosecurity and biosafety. We attach great importance to the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention as a fundamental component of the disarmament architecture, and to the Secretary-General's Mechanism for Investigation of Alleged Use of Chemical and Biological Weapons.

Italy is extremely concerned about the indiscriminate humanitarian and socioeconomic impacts of anti-personnel landmines, cluster munitions and other explosive remnants of war, as well as improvised explosive devices. We reaffirm the importance of international cooperation and victim assistance as key components of our commitment for a world free of mines.

With regard to illicit arm transfers, we call for the universalization of the Arms Trade Treaty and its full implementation.

Italy is firmly committed to the long-term sustainability, safety and security of outer space. We support the efforts to prevent an arms race in outer space and we encourage further international cooperation to elaborate agreed principles of responsible behaviour in that area.

Italy also supports all efforts towards a global, open, free, stable and secure cyberspace —

The Chair (*spoke in French*): I am sorry, but the speaker's time has expired.

Ms. Mudallali (Lebanon): Let me begin by congratulating you, Mr. Chair, on your election. I would also like to congratulate the other members of the Bureau and wish you and them every success in guiding the work of the First Committee.

Lebanon aligns itself with the statements delivered by the representative of the State of Palestine on behalf of the Group of Arab States and by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/76/PV.2).

Seventy-five years after the founding of the United Nations with the noble goal of ridding the world of nuclear weapons, the arms control regime is weaker than ever and the disarmament agenda has stalled, while great-Power rivalry and tensions in international security relations have reached their highest levels in generations. Some nuclear-weapon States are modernizing and expanding their arsenals and consequently violating the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), which is weakening the arms control regime, putting the disarmament process in disarray and wiping out the gains of a half-century on arms control.

Despite that gloomy picture, there are two developments that give a glimmer of hope for a better future on the proliferation and the arms control fronts.

The first is the latest agreement between the United States and Russia to extend the New START Treaty for five years. The second is the entry into force of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons on 22 January. We welcome both and hope they put the disarmament agenda back on track.

The long-awaited tenth NPT Review Conference, to be held next year, will provide an opportunity to put the world on a serious path towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons through a successful outcome that strengthens the NPT and the non-proliferation regime. It will be an opportunity to stress yet again the obligations of all States to make progress on the elimination of nuclear weapons, while pushing for implementing the three pillars of the NPT simultaneously.

Nuclear-weapon-free zones are a key component of the disarmament agenda. Lebanon welcomes the adoption of the political declaration and the final report of the first session of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and other Weapons of Mass Destruction, which was presided over by Jordan in 2019. We look forward to the next session of the Conference, to be held in November under the presidency of Kuwait.

Israel — which is the only country believed to possess nuclear weapons in the region and is not a party to the NPT — cannot continue to defy the will of the international community and must comply with the international norms and non-proliferation rules.

Lebanon also calls for the elimination of nuclear weapons by guaranteeing the universality and the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

The enormous challenges posed by weapons of mass destruction should not lead us to lose sight of the dangers associated with conventional weapons. Lebanon shares with other countries their deep concern about the challenges resulting from the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. In that respect, we welcome the outcome document of the 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 (A/CONF.192/BMS/2021/1, annex), held last July under the chairmanship of Kenya.

Lebanon reiterates its commitment to the Convention on Cluster Munitions and the importance

of striving to achieve its universalization. Lebanon has also had a painful experience with such weapons as a result of the enormous amounts of cluster munitions used by Israel against it in the 2006 war.

Lebanon welcomes the consensual adoption of the outcome document (see A/75/816) of the Open-ended Working Group on Developments in the Field of Information and Telecommunications in the context of International Security, which was established by resolution 73/27.

Lebanon also emphasizes the need to protect outer space from an arms race, contamination and pollution. It strives to preserve outer space as a common human property that is available exclusively for peaceful use and genuinely hopes that we reach a binding international instrument that will prohibit placing weapons in outer space and making it into an arena of war. Lebanon would also welcome a treaty to prevent polluting outer space and turning it into a junk yard.

We need to restart the conversation about nuclear weapons and their danger. That cannot be the work of a single country or region. It is a mission for all of us; we all have to work together to make it happen. Unilateral efforts are not the answer. Multilateralism is.

Ms. Oppong-Ntiri (Ghana): Ghana associates itself with the statements delivered on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and on behalf of the Group of African States (see A/C.1/76/PV.2). We will make the following additional remarks in our national capacity.

The extraordinary circumstances created by the coronavirus disease pandemic have provided a stark reminder of the vulnerabilities of our global society. Unfortunately, in the middle of the prevailing crisis, the international security environment remains saddled with protracted conflicts and existential threats posed by nuclear weapons, other weapons of mass destruction, terrorism and transnational organized crime.

Equally worrisome is the attempt by some States to reintroduce new concepts to justify an immoral arms race, reinterpret their disarmament and non-proliferation obligations and create new fighting domains in cyberspace and outer space. Of additional concern are the ongoing, extensive and expensive plans by nuclear-weapon States to replace, modernize and maintain their nuclear warheads, missile and aircraft

delivery systems and nuclear-weapon production facilities and capabilities.

My delegation would like to emphasize the following points.

First, the realities of our present time serve to underline the need for enhanced multilateral and international cooperation to address the challenge of human security and international stability. Indeed, the prospects of miscalculation and the deliberate or accidental use of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction by States that possess them is at an all-time high. Fortunately, a prudent legal pathway towards eliminating nuclear weapons has been established by the adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which entered into force on 22 January. We must all commit to the landmark Treaty.

Secondly, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons remains the cornerstone of the global nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime. Ghana remains committed to a balanced implementation of obligations across the Treaty's three pillars. With regard to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, there is an urgent need for the remaining eight annex 2 States to ratify the Treaty without further delay with a view to its entry into force, as the status quo may no longer be sustainable two decades after its adoption.

Thirdly, the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones around the world remains an important mechanism in the disarmament and non-proliferation regime. We encourage such regimes in all regions. Ghana considers the Secretary-General's *Securing our Common Future: An Agenda for Disarmament*, which focuses on disarmament to save humankind, disarmament that saves lives and disarmament for future generations, to be an important approach towards repositioning arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation issues at the centre of the United Nations activities.

Ghana remains concerned about the escalating human suffering, death toll and gendered impacts arising from the proliferation and excess acquisition of conventional weapons around the world, especially in Africa. The Arms Trade Treaty underscores the importance of responsible arms transfers to reduce human suffering and the need to prevent and eradicate the diversion of conventional weapons to illicit markets and unauthorized end use. We therefore call on all States that have yet to join the Treaty to do so in order to achieve its universalization.

We also call on arms-manufacturing and arms-exporting countries to respect the control and exemption certificate regime for arms imports into West Africa, which was established by the Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons, Their Ammunition and Other Related Materials of the Economic Community of the West African States in order to reduce diversions and illicit transfers.

Ghana further welcomes the outcome of the 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 (A/CONF.192/BMS/2021/1, annex).

Outer space, the common heritage of humankind, is threatened by dangerous orbital debris, weaponization and the increased use of new frontier technologies that can engender warfare and conflict. That international concern urgently requires a renewed focus on ensuring safety in outer space for our common good.

Finally, Ghana welcomes the progress made by the Open-ended Working Group on Developments in the Field of Information and Telecommunications in the Context of International Security, as the first inclusive machinery established within the United Nations with the participation of all Member States to continue furthering the development of rules, norms and principles concerning responsible State behaviour.

My delegation believes that, as one body, we must renew our commitment to safeguard our world.

Mrs. Wang (Singapore): I congratulate you, Sir, and the other members of the Bureau on your and their election.

Singapore aligns itself with the statements delivered on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations by the representative of Indonesia and the representative of Thailand, respectively (see A/C.1/76/PV.2). We would like to add the following points in our national capacity.

First, the path to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation continues to be fraught with challenges. Old rivalries remain, and new risks are emerging. Seventy-six years on, the ultimate goal of a world free of nuclear weapons remains elusive.

Singapore is strongly committed to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, as

the cornerstone of the international disarmament and non-proliferation regime. The upcoming tenth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons presents an opportunity to step up our collective efforts in search of common and practical solutions. That will not be easy, but we hope that all countries will make the political commitment to chart concrete gains on disarmament and non-proliferation.

As we mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of the adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty this year, we urge all Member States that have yet to sign and ratify the Treaty, particularly the remaining annex 2 countries, to take concrete actions in order to bring the Treaty into force.

We also look forward to the launch of negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty and the successful convening of the United Nations Commission on Disarmament.

At the regional level, Singapore supports the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones as a practical and confidence-building measure. We reaffirm our commitment to the Treaty on the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone and look forward to continued dialogue with nuclear-weapon States on their accession to its Protocol, without reservations.

We also welcome all efforts to achieve genuine and lasting peace in a nuclear-weapon-free Middle East. At the national level, Singapore takes its international non-proliferation and disarmament obligations seriously. As a major trading hub, we are fully committed to implementing all relevant Security Council resolutions, including to prevent the illicit trafficking of weapons of mass destruction.

Secondly, Member States must continue discussions on the development of common international standards for the transfer of conventional arms to end illicit trade and regulate stockpiles. Singapore reiterates its support for efforts to promote greater transparency in armaments, such as regular reporting on international arms transfers and arms control policies, through the Register of Conventional Arms, the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in all Its Aspects and the Arms Trade Treaty.

In that regard, Singapore was honoured to have been a member of the recently concluded Group of

Governmental Experts on Problems Arising from the Accumulation of Conventional Ammunition Stockpiles in Surplus and to have contributed to discussions on best practices in stockpile management.

Thirdly, new technologies have introduced new domains of conflict. For instance, increasingly sophisticated cyberattacks can have significant negative impacts on our societies and economies. In that regard, the United Nations must play a leading role in the development of international cybernorms, as well as in upholding the implementation of the 11 voluntary norms on promoting responsible State behaviour in cyberspace.

Singapore welcomes the consensus reports of the recently concluded Open-ended Working Group on Developments in the Field of Information and Telecommunications in the Context of International Security (see A/75/816) and the Group of Governmental Experts on Advancing Responsible State Behaviour in Cyberspace in the Context of International Security (see A/76/135), which contribute to our common understanding on many issues and identify areas in which more discussions are needed.

Singapore is honoured to have been elected as the Chair of the newly established Open-ended Working Group for the period from 2021 to 2025. We are committed to continuing the open, inclusive and transparent discussions on cybersecurity at the United Nations and look forward to working closely with all Member States in that regard.

With regard to outer space, we reiterate our commitment to its use for peaceful purposes and look forward to exploring practical initiatives to ensure the security and sustainability of that global commons.

You have our full support, Mr. Chair, and Singapore looks forward to working with all Member States to achieve a successful outcome at the First Committee.

Mr. Yakut (Turkey): I would like to congratulate you, Mr. Chair, and the other members of the Bureau on your and their election and assure you of our full support and cooperation.

The challenges to the rules-based international order and the global disarmament and non-proliferation architecture continue unabated. Important arms control instruments have either been eroded or become defunct in the past few years. We need to change that course by upholding international norms,

fully implementing obligations and commitments, restoring dialogue and promoting transparency and confidence-building measures. Turkey will continue to support effective multilateralism.

Five decades after its entry into force, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) remains the cornerstone of the global nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime. Turkey calls for the strengthened implementation of the NPT across its three pillars and its universalization.

We look forward to the convening of the postponed tenth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons as soon as possible with a view to producing tangible results. Turkey is committed to the goal of systematic, progressive, verifiable and irreversible nuclear disarmament. As a member of Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative, we pledge our support for and contribution to achieving a successful outcome at the Review Conference.

We welcome the extension of the New START Treaty to 2026, as well as the strategic stability dialogue process initiated between the Russian Federation and the United States.

We also reaffirm our strong support for the establishment of a zone in the Middle East free of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems. We take note of the process for the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction, which was first convened in November 2019 and will convene for a second time in November of this year.

The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) is essential to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. As we mark its twenty-fifth year, we hope that the CTBT will enter into force as soon as possible. We encourage the remaining annex 2 States to sign and ratify the Treaty without delay.

The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action remains a major achievement of multilateralism and non-proliferation efforts. We call for the preservation of the instrument and encourage the parties to resume the diplomatic efforts in Vienna.

Turkey expresses its deep concerns about the nuclear and ballistic missile programme of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. We fully support the complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization

of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. We expect a return to dialogue and negotiations between the parties.

We strongly condemn the repeated use of chemical weapons in Syria, which constitutes a crime against humanity. We welcome the two reports of the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) (S/1867/2020 and S/1943/2021), which established the responsibility of the Syrian regime for chemical-weapon attacks perpetrated in Ltamenah in March 2017 and Saraqib in February 2018.

The IIT's work is crucial to the efforts towards establishing accountability. The Syrian regime should fully cooperate with the IIT and the OPCW Technical Secretariat with regard to its chemical weapons programme and stockpiles and fulfil its legal obligations. Turkey welcomed and supported the decision adopted at the Conference of the States Parties last April, which aims to bring the Syrian regime back into compliance with the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Turkey reaffirms its strong support for key instruments, such as the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention, and calls for strengthening their implementation.

Turkey is committed to the effective implementation and strengthening of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and the International Tracing Instrument. The Arms Trade Treaty is also an important instrument in that area.

We welcome the successful conclusion of 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 and look forward to achieving further tangible progress next year at the eighth Biennial Meeting.

The consensus agreement on the report of the Group of Governmental Experts on Problems Arising from the Accumulation of Conventional Ammunition Stockpiles in Surplus (see A/76/324) is also a welcome sign. Turkey is fully committed to the implementation of the Ottawa Convention and the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons.

Peace and security in outer space can be achieved only through the prevention of an arms race in outer

space. We need to increase international cooperation and establish standards of responsible State behaviour in outer space. Turkey is greatly concerned about the growing threat that the malicious use of information and communications technologies poses to international peace and security.

We welcome the adoption of the reports of the Open-ended Working Group on Developments in the Field of Information and Telecommunications in the Context of International Security (see A/75/816) and of the Group of Governmental Experts on Advancing Responsible State Behaviour in Cyberspace in the Context of International Security (see A/76/135), which contribute to the existing body of work in that area.

In conclusion, the effective functioning of the United Nations disarmament machinery is crucial to a cooperation-based understanding of security. The First Committee is an important pillar in that regard. Turkey is ready to contribute to achieving much-needed progress on a wide range of issues on our agenda and calls for a spirit of collegiality, cooperation and compromise.

The Chair (*spoke in French*): I take this opportunity to thank and commend His Excellency Mr. Agustín Santos Maraver, Permanent Representative of Spain and former Chair of the First Committee at its seventy-fifth session, for the manner in which he chaired the work of the Committee last year.

Mr. Santos Maraver (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank you, Mr. Chair, for your kind words. We wish you every success in your chairmanship of the First Committee, which we are certain will have an excellent outcome.

Spain aligns itself with the statement made by the observer of the European Union (see A/C.1/76/PV.2).

There are many challenges facing international security today. The path leading towards disarmament and non-proliferation is one of the principal ways to address them, and the Secretary-General's *Securing our Common Future — An Agenda for Disarmament* shows us the way forward.

The extension of the New START Treaty and the resumption of strategic stability talks between the United States and Russia offer the possibility that a new nuclear arms control framework covering all delivery systems and categories of weapons can be adopted. We hope that will become a reality and that other stakeholders will agree to participate in it.

For five decades, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons has facilitated important progress in the areas of disarmament, non-proliferation and the promotion of peaceful uses of nuclear technology. We must reaffirm its central role and ensure the success of the tenth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. Spain is invested in the Stockholm Initiative on Nuclear Disarmament, which is capable of bringing together divergent opinions.

Spain reiterates its firm commitment to the early entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, as well as to the resumption of negotiations on the adoption of a fissile material cut-off treaty.

Similarly, Spain supports the convening of a new session of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction and would like to see the inclusion of all parties in its work.

Spain continues to view the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, endorsed by resolution 2231 (2015), as a vital contribution to the international nuclear non-proliferation regime and regional stability. We call on the Iranian authorities to uphold their commitments and resume the Vienna talks as soon as possible, with the hope that an agreement can soon be reached. In that regard, we fully support the determined efforts of European Union High Representative Borrell and the work of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

We are following with great concern the developments in North Korea. We urge the country's authorities to comply with the relevant Security Council resolutions, refrain from new nuclear tests and commit to dialogue.

Spain reiterates in the strongest terms its condemnation of the use of chemical weapons in any form. We commend the outstanding work of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons in its response to the use of that category of weapon in the Syrian conflict. We urge the Syrian authorities to fully comply with their obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention.

The impact of the pandemic has provided us with arguments to advocate for strengthening the framework of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention. Looking ahead to the ninth Review Conference of the Parties to the Biological Weapons Convention, we

must push for the adoption of concrete and practical measures, such as an effective verification protocol.

We have built a framework to address the challenges posed by the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, with instruments such as the Arms Trade Treaty and the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. We must continue to support the capacity-building of States that have fewer resources so that they can better address that scourge. The havoc wreaked by anti-personnel mines and cluster munitions continues to hinder the development of many communities. Spain remains committed to supporting demining efforts.

The Review Conference of the States Parties to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects will consider the proposals of the Group of Governmental Experts on Autonomous Lethal Weapons Systems. We must reach an agreement to establish a regulatory framework for their deployment and use and meet the requirements related to human control and other principles of international humanitarian law.

We need to urgently address the proliferation of malicious and unlawful activities in cyberspace. An action plan to promote responsible State behaviour in cyberspace would be an important step.

Despite the paralysis from which disarmament forums are suffering, we must not forsake but revitalize them. We urge the Conference on Disarmament to overcome its differences and adopt a programme of work so that, through dialogue, we can regain the confidence necessary to move forward.

Mr. Pary Rodríguez (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): Let me congratulate you, Sir, as well as the members of the Bureau, on your and their election. Please rest assured that you can count on the support of my delegation. We are certain that under your leadership we will have a substantive session on the essential issues in the areas of international disarmament and security.

Bolivia aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (A/C.1/76/PV.2). I would like to make the following comments in my national capacity.

As a country located in a region designated as a zone of peace with a long tradition of promoting disarmament and non-proliferation, Bolivia is opposed to the modernization of existing nuclear weapons and the development of new types of the same weapons. We therefore underscore that the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons is one of the pillars of the collective security system and a fundamental element with regard to the maintenance of international peace and security. We reiterate the obligation of every State party to comply with it in accordance with the provisions of article VI of the Treaty.

We hope that the tenth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons will be held without further delay in 2022, owing to its key role in upholding the balance of obligations and rights of its States parties. We welcome the extension of the New START Treaty between the United States and Russia, as it will contribute to the effective control of nuclear weapons. In that context, we call for upholding the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action by all parties.

With regard to the use of weapons of mass destruction, Bolivia categorically rejects the use of chemical weapons as an unjustifiable and criminal act, given that their use constitutes a serious crime in contravention of international law and life itself. In that regard, we welcome the exhaustive work of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons in that area. However, we hope that it can continue to carry out its work in the absence of political interests.

Bolivia acknowledges humankind's shared interest in outer space and the sovereign right of all States to participate in the exploration of outer space for exclusively peaceful uses. We are convinced of the benefits of such exploration for human development. However, we reaffirm our position on preventing an arms race in outer space and the militarization of that environment. Moreover, we believe that technological changes require a system-wide assessment of the possible effects of scientific and technological advances in the area of international security and of disarmament so as to guarantee international stability and security and prevent an adverse impact on the integrity of State infrastructure.

Our work should seek to establish a regimen that can help generate capacities in developing countries,

in the light of increasing challenges such as the abuse of information and communications technologies for dangerous activities, from bullying to crimes and terrorism. We therefore welcome the conclusions of the Open-ended Working Group on Developments in the Field of Information and Telecommunications in the Context of International Security (see A/75/816) and the adoption of resolutions 73/27 and 75/240. We hope that such work will continue following the creation of a new working group and be concluded positively.

We are facing considerable global tension at a time of rising uncertainty and instability. We are convinced of the importance of multilateralism in countering threats that may emerge in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation.

The pandemic also demonstrated that international challenges can be addressed only through multilateral cooperation. Therefore, in the light of the challenges presented by arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation, cybersecurity and sustainable development, Bolivia reiterates the need for greater cooperation and solidarity and renewed multilateralism so as to ensure we fulfil the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

Ms. Moloeli (Lesotho): My delegation hereby congratulates you, Mr. Chair, and the other members of the Bureau on your and their election and assures you of our full support and cooperation.

We wish to associate ourselves with the statements delivered on behalf of the Group of African States and on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/76/PV.2).

As we meet again for yet another session, this platform provides us with an opportunity to reflect on the progress achieved during the past year. While we welcome the progress made in some areas, we are aware of the daunting work that remains to be done in the area of strengthening international security and disarmament in general.

We remain concerned about the continuing impasse in the United Nations disarmament machinery. Undoubtedly, the failure of the Conference on Disarmament in making substantive progress for well over two decades has put the credibility of that crucially important body at high risk and impacted negatively on the multilateral system of governance.

The disarmament and international security landscape has seen some progress recently with the ratification and subsequent entry into force of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. However, there is still more that needs to be done, particularly by nuclear-weapon States, in the area of nuclear disarmament.

The existing massive stockpile of nuclear weapons, as well as the modernization of such weapons, casts a shadow of doubt on our prospects for attaining a nuclear-free world in the immediate future. The argument that nuclear weapons are indispensable for the security of some States but not for others lacks credibility. It is our view that nuclear weapons create a false sense of security. Their possession fuels mistrust and heightens tensions among States.

We wish to underscore that full compliance with the provisions of the Treaty on Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is critical for our nuclear disarmament agenda. We therefore call upon all States parties to the NPT to honour their obligations and to faithfully and without precondition implement all the commitments agreed in the past years. As we prepare for the next Review Conference of the Parties to the NPT, in January 2022, we must do so with unity of purpose. Our deliberations at the Conference should be guided by the spirit of frankness and mutual understanding, without the acrimony that often characterizes our intergovernmental deliberations.

Some 25 years since its adoption, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) has not yet entered into force. We reiterate our call for the universalization of the Treaty, in particular its ratification by the remaining annex 2 States. While we welcome pronouncements by some States that they are committed to ratifying the CTBT, we wish to emphasize that such pronouncements will be meaningless unless they are accompanied by concrete action towards ratification.

We demonstrated a collective resolve by adopting the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) in April 2013 and witnessed its entry into force the following year. However, conventional weapons continue to bring untold sorrow to us in the developing world. A fair and balanced yet robust implementation of the ATT is critical in order to achieve the goals of the Treaty in regulating international trade in conventional arms and contributing to combating illicit transfers.

Lesotho continues to believe that the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects represents the central universally agreed set of undertakings to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons.

Allow me to conclude by reiterating Lesotho's support for all United Nations resolutions on arms control and disarmament. I also wish to take this opportunity to call on the entire international community to join hands in bridging the gulf between rhetoric and action and fast-track the implementation of the NPT.

The Chair (*spoke in French*): I now invite the Committee to view a pre-recorded statement by the representative of Canada.

A pre-recorded video statement was shown in the Conference Room.

Mr. Sabbagh (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): I congratulate you, Mr. Chair, on your election to chair the First Committee and assure you of my country's full support and cooperation.

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.1/76/PV.2).

For the second year in a row, we meet as the world grapples with the coronavirus disease (COVID-19), which exposed the world's vulnerability at a time when some countries refer to the lack of resources to fight disease, hunger and poverty and at the same time increase their spending on armaments. The pandemic has proved that the possession of modern weapons by some States, including nuclear weapons, has failed to save humankind from the socioeconomic and health impacts of the pandemic.

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is a key pillar of international peace and security. As a party to the Treaty, Syria continues to believe that the implementation of the NPT and its universality in the Middle East are important tools for preventing the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons.

The tenth NPT Review Conference, to be held early next year, provides another opportunity to reach a meaningful consensus on moving ahead with the implementation of the undertakings and commitments

under the NPT and the decisions reached in the outcome documents of previous Review Conferences.

Syria therefore stresses the importance of the implementation of the Middle East resolution adopted at the 1995 Review and Extension Conference as part of the indefinite extension deal of the Treaty. The intransigence of Israel with respect to acceding to the NPT as a non-nuclear State and its refusal to respond to the calls of States would not have happened if not for the protection of the United States and its allies and their assistance in increasing Israel's arsenal of weapons of mass destruction.

The fact that Israel is the only country in the Middle East in possession of nuclear weapons and that it refuses to join all relevant conventions and treaties makes it the main threat to peace and security in the region. Procrastination in implementing the 1995 resolution undermines the effectiveness of the non-proliferation regime.

Syria stresses that the use of chemical weapons under any circumstances and by anyone is unacceptable and should be condemned. Therefore, Syria voluntarily acceded to the Chemical Weapons Convention and fulfilled all its obligations in very short order.

Regrettably, some countries insist on politicizing this discussion by continuing to level baseless accusations against Syria in reports that are not credible. As a result, Syria's cooperation with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons has been called into question. The provisions of the Convention are employed to establish mechanisms against Syria. Other actions are also undertaken and set a serious precedent in the work of the organization.

Syria has submitted hundreds of letters to the Secretary-General, the Security Council, the General Assembly and all counter-terrorism committees, containing important information about the fact that terrorist groups possess toxic material and that the intelligence agencies of some countries use groups such as Da'esh and the Al-Nusra Front. The letters prove that those groups have used toxic weapons although they claim that in fact it was the Government of Syria that used them. Some Governments level accusations at Syria and justify their acts of aggression against Syria. Regrettably, the letters we sent have not been taken seriously.

We reiterate our support for the approach taken by Russia and China. We also support Iran against the illegal and irresponsible measures and decisions taken by the United States of America.

The Chair: I shall now call on those delegations that have requested to speak in the exercise of the right of reply.

Mr. Balouji (Islamic Republic of Iran): I take the floor to exercise my right of reply in response to the baseless allegations about my country made by the representatives of some European countries and the representative of Saudi Arabia. We categorically reject them.

With regard to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), as we stated earlier, the uncontested reality is that to date Iran has adhered to the terms of the JCPOA, while the United States, France, Germany and the United Kingdom have failed to meet their JCPOA obligations. Iran is committed to the full implementation of the JCPOA, provided that the other participants fully live up to their commitments and lift all unjust sanctions in a speedy and verifiable manner.

Iran's defensive missile capability is being pursued in line with our inherent rights and international commitments. In addition to honouring their JCPOA commitments, those three European countries need to put pressure on the United States to return to the full implementation of the JCPOA and resolution 2231 (2015).

It is a fact that, during the negotiations on the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, Saudi Arabia, along with the Israeli regime, tried its best to derail the process. Their position on the Plan is not surprising. Following the Plan's conclusion and unanimous endorsement by the Security Council in resolution 2231 (2015), they have missed no opportunities, including by disseminating disinformation, to seriously undermine the full and effective implementation of the Plan and of resolution 2231 (2015). They systematically continue to pursue such policies and practices, in gross violation of their explicit legal obligations under the Charter of the United Nations.

The representative of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia raises questions about Iran's peaceful nuclear programme, while it continues to implement an old version of the small-quantities protocols, thereby preventing the International Atomic Energy Agency

from being able to fully monitor and verify Saudi nuclear activities.

With respect to regional security, levelling unfounded accusations against the defensive ballistic missile programme of Iran is also an attempt to cover up the skyrocketing trend in the military expenditure of Saudi Arabia and its unquenchable thirst for importing deadly arms. In fact, the real source of regional insecurity is the massive build-up of foreign forces and military installations — many of them hosted by some countries of the region, including Saudi Arabia.

We hope that Saudi Arabia will heed Iran's call to establish a dialogue within the region to address regional problems.

Mr. Eberhardt (United States of America): I regret having to take the floor today to exercise the right to reply in response to the statement delivered by the representative of the People's Republic of China, joined by Russia. I had hoped to get through this year's session without ever exercising such a right.

As such, I listened to the litany of false charges levelled against the United States earlier this week by the representatives of China and Russia, without a reply. I trusted that the well-informed members of the First Committee would take such accusations for what they were worth. However, in their most recent broadside today they accused the United States of being opaque and called for it to be more transparent. From them, that is too much.

Just yesterday, the United States held a side event at which we released the current numbers for our nuclear-weapons stockpile, continuing a tradition that began in 2014. How many weapons do China and Russia have? That is a good question. China claims it seeks only minimum deterrence. However, it refuses to define what that means. It clearly does not mean anything close to the number of weapons it has today, as it is engaged in a remarkable, rapid and destabilizing build-up of its nuclear arsenal. That may explain why China is the only nuclear-weapon State that refuses to implement a moratorium on the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons.

While currently in compliance with the New START Treaty, Russia is also developing strategic systems that may well fall outside the terms of that Treaty. Meanwhile, the United States plans to replace each decades-old leg of our nuclear triad with a

like replacement — all within the limits of the New START — are a matter of public record. That is how democracies operate, unlike authoritarian regimes.

As for today's charges, China and Russia have used their statement to recycle Russian talking points about biological laboratories in foreign countries, constructed with the financial support of the United States. Such facilities are constructed — or, more often, renovated and improved — in close cooperation with the foreign partners who own and operate them.

The world continues to struggle with the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) virus that originated in China in late 2019 and many of those laboratories are critical to the COVID-19 response. Giving credence to such baseless, politically motivated allegations not only insults the countries working to improve their laboratory capacity but also threatens the global response to debilitating outbreaks, such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

China and Russia also seek to perpetuate the myth that, if not for the United States, negotiations on a protocol to the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) would rapidly resume and bear fruit. In truth, those negotiations were mired in disagreement. It is not the United States that blocks progress in the BWC. We have made clear that we are willing to explore the full range of approaches to strengthening the Convention, including legally binding measures.

We also believe there are steps we can take right now, without waiting. Given some of the disagreements on the BWC, an all-or-nothing approach is a good way to get nothing, and by now the credibility of those who insist on it should be suspect. We urge all States parties to resolve to take action at the upcoming Review Conference of the States Parties to the BWC. As Under Secretary for Arms Control and International Security Jenkins said yesterday (see A/C.1/76/PV.4), that action should include launching an intensive process to explore options to strengthen implementation and compliance in the light of today's threats and today's science.

There really is a need to avoid actions that could lead to a renewed nuclear arms race. There is a need for greater transparency. The United States has been, and will remain, a leader with regard to both. We call on Russia and China to set aside their false narratives and take meaningful action to follow our lead.

Mr. In Chol Kim (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): My delegation is compelled to take the floor

to exercise its right of reply in response to the false accusations made by some European countries earlier today. I will be as brief as possible, as we have clarified our position in previous sessions.

European countries are losing sight of priorities, as they are very obsessed with the idea of blindly following the hostile policy of the United States against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The key to ensuring peace and security on the Korean peninsula and in the rest of the region is the once-and-for-all suspension of the years of the hostile policy and double standards practised against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

European countries must abandon the Cold War mentality and double standard of pointing an accusing finger at the exercise of the inherent right of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to self-defence, while intentionally turning a blind eye to the military threat and other hostile acts by the United States.

If those countries are truly interested in ensuring peace and security in the region, why do they remain silent on the establishment of the trilateral security pact among Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States to transfer nuclear technology to Australia? Such a move is very dangerous, as it triggers an arms race and disrupts peace and security in the region. The international community is urged to take urgent action to address that challenge. I would like to advise those European countries to be reasonable and return to their senses.

Mr. Vorontsov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We would like to respond to the arbitrary and baseless accusations of the representative of Poland against Russia in the context of the Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty, which were made yesterday in the First Committee (see A/C.1/76/PV.4).

We recall that, despite our efforts to support the viability of the Treaty, it was deliberately broken on fabricated grounds by the previous United States Administration. At the same time, contrary to the interests of their own security, that destabilizing step was supported by European allies of the United States, including Poland. As a result, the foundation for a new missile crisis and arms race in Europe and other regions of the world was created.

Furthermore, with the direct participation of the European allies of the United States of America,

including Poland, NATO rejected Russia's initiative to ensure predictability and restraint concerning the end of the validity of the INF Treaty. We call on NATO countries to demonstrate a pragmatic approach and be constructive with regard to our substantive proposal concerning reciprocal verifiable moratoriums on short- and medium-range land-based missiles.

I would also like to respond to the provocative and baseless accusations by the delegations of Norway, Italy and Canada, which were in no way substantiated by assessments of the so-called Navalny case. As I do not wish to repeat myself and waste our valuable time, I would ask that my Norwegian, Italian and Canadian colleagues refer to the statement I delivered in right of reply yesterday (see A/C.1/76/PV.4), in which I set out in detail our views on the absurd situation regarding the investigation of that case.

Once again, we underscore that the Russian Federation is focused on bringing to light the truth of that incident. In that regard, we reiterate our readiness to cooperate with law enforcement agencies and relevant experts.

Mr. Knyazyan (Armenia): I take the floor to exercise our right of reply in response to the statement delivered by the delegation of Azerbaijan.

We reject the outdated mantras voiced by Azerbaijan in a desperate attempt to conceal its responsibility for unleashing the largest escalation in the region, with the involvement of thousands of foreign terrorist fighters from the Middle East, as well as for war crimes and other grave violations of international humanitarian law and human rights law.

In his statement, the representative of Azerbaijan referred once again to the so-called counter-offensive. He likely learned a lesson from the famous Nazi propaganda chief Joseph Goebbels, who once said that a lie told once remains a lie, but a lie told a thousand times becomes the truth. I would kindly discourage the representative of Azerbaijan from insulting the intelligence and sound judgment of this body.

The reality is that it was a pre-planned and well-prepared act of aggression, while the international community mobilized its efforts to fight the pandemic. Azerbaijan closed down transit air corridors in the two months prior despite the absence of any threat to its civilian air traffic. Along Armenian State borders and the line of contact with Nagorno-Karabakh, Azerbaijan

had been carrying out provocative flights since 21 September 2020. A week before the aggression, Azerbaijan began drafting reservists and confiscating civilian trucks for military needs. Moreover, on 25 September 2020, the Azerbaijani Ministry of Defence rejected the request of the international monitors to conduct ceasefire monitoring in the conflict zone.

From the early morning of 27 September 2020 — the day of the aggression — the Azerbaijani authorities blocked social networks and media outlets. Preparations for the aggression were accompanied by large-scale military exercises conducted by Azerbaijan from 29 July to 10 August 2020 in Baku, Nakhchivan and other cities, involving thousands of military personnel, hundreds of armoured combat vehicles, artillery and military aviation, including unmanned aerial vehicles.

Given the overwhelming volume of evidence, I understand that the Azerbaijani representative has nothing else to do but repeat, time and again, his outdated point about a so-called counter-offensive and the inherent right to self-defence, which has nothing to do with the truth.

Regarding compliance with the Arms Trade Treaty, I would like to stress that Armenia is committed to the maintenance of the legally binding conventional arms control regimes in Europe and fully complies with its obligations on force limitations, on-site inspections and the exchange of information. Those are not just words — our commitment has been proven by the numerous inspections that Armenia has received, the reports of which confirm Armenia's full compliance with the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe and the Vienna Document.

Contrariwise, Azerbaijan's grave violations of the conventional arms control regime and confidence- and security-building measures, which began decades ago, continue to pose a serious security threat to the region. In 2020, according to the official information provided by Azerbaijan, it continued to exceed its ceilings in four out of five categories of major conventional arms established by the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe.

Half of its armed forces located along the Armenia-Azerbaijan State border and the line of contact with Artsakh have been completely excluded from inspection and verification for decades, undermining the credibility of data provided by Azerbaijan on its annual military information exchange and enabling

Azerbaijan to concentrate large numbers of unverifiable armed forces and military equipment in the vicinity of our borders.

We took note of the point made with regard to mine action in conflict contexts. For almost three decades, Nagorno-Karabakh has been deprived of humanitarian assistance to address severe mine contamination as a result of Azerbaijan's military activities. Azerbaijan continues to obstruct demining activities to date.

Mr. Moharram (Saudi Arabia) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to exercise my right of reply in response to the statement made by the representative of Iran (see A/C.1/76/PV.4).

At the outset, I wish to note what the representative said about the small quantities protocol agreed between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), which proves that my country upholds its obligations to organizations at the international level.

On the other hand, Iran has violated the implementation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) from the outset by exceeding the agreed quantities of heavy water. I would like also to underscore Iran's violations of the agreed production and usage of centrifuges. Moreover, Iran did not allow inspectors to access its military installations.

Recently, Iran declared that its commitments under the JCPOA had been revised downwards. According to the report of the Director-General of the IAEA, Iran has violated its commitments under the Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement signed between Iran and the IAEA, in particular with regard to not declaring material and not allowing inspectors to have access to certain sites.

All those actions are violations by Iran of the JCPOA and the additional protocol. I also recall that resolution 2231 (2015) calls upon Iran to sign and ratify the additional protocol, which it has not done to date. We call upon Iran to do as the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has done and respect its international obligations and commitments.

With regard to the comments by the representative of Iran on the situation in Yemen, I would like to emphasize that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has announced an initiative for a political solution in Yemen, but the Houthis have not yet responded to that initiative so far, with the well-known support of

Iran. The Houthis continue to launch ballistic missiles against civilian installations in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Those missiles, as everybody knows, are made in Iran.

Iran continues to support militias acting outside the law by providing them with ballistic missiles and advanced weapons to destabilize security and stability in the States of the region. We call upon Iran to behave responsibly and abstain from such illegal practices, in which no responsible State should be engaged. We ask Iran to follow the example of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia with regard to implementing its international obligations.

Mr. Wu Jianjun (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I would like to exercise my right of reply in response to the statement made by the representative of the United States.

We totally reject the groundless accusations levelled by the United States against China. Justice is in the hearts of the people. The United States accusations can neither expunge China's positive contribution to international security and disarmament, nor cover up the serious damage caused by the United States utilitarian approach and double standards are threats to international peace and security.

The United States has been seeking absolute military supremacy by constantly playing up competition among major Powers, reinforcing its military alliance system, spending huge sums of money to upgrade its trinity nuclear arsenal, lowering the threshold for the use of nuclear weapons, and continuously developing and deploying its anti-missile system globally. A series of negative trends of the United States in the fields of nuclear missiles, biological and chemical weapons and outer space poses a serious threat to international peace and security and undermines global strategic balance and stability.

China adheres to true multilateralism. We firmly oppose the arms race and remain committed to the maintenance of international arms control and non-proliferation system. We have been consistent in our self-defence nuclear strategy and our policy of not being the first to use nuclear weapons. This policy has not changed and will not change. China has played and will continue to play a constructive role in promoting the disarmament and arms control process and global governance in the fields of weapons of mass destruction, conventional weapons, outer space and cyberspace.

Regarding a fissile material cut-off treaty, China believes that a moratorium has not been clearly defined or scoped and that it has no verification. On the contrary, it will serve only to undermine the political motivation of the international community to negotiate a fissile material cut-off treaty. Our urgent task now is to negotiate and conclude a legally binding arms control document in the Conference on Disarmament.

Just now, the representative of the United States used the platform of the United Nations to spread a political virus. He attacked and discredited China over the coronavirus disease pandemic, which is totally unacceptable. I should like to advise the United States once again that shifting the blame on others will not cover up its own failures in fighting the pandemic and will not deceive the international community.

Establishing a verification mechanism is the most effective means to ensure compliance and mutual confidence in the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on their Destruction (BWC). We support the establishment of a verification mechanism under the BWC and urge the United States to stop blocking the negotiation of the verification protocol, act in a responsible manner and demonstrate full transparency regarding its military biological activities carried out overseas and on national territory.

In the light of the current situation, there is an increased urgency to strengthen the Convention. The joint statement by the Chinese and Russian Foreign Ministers on strengthening the Convention embodies the firm determination and responsible attitude of both countries towards safeguarding the authority and effectiveness of the Convention and defending the multilateral arms control and disarmament system.

China will continue to work to strengthen the Convention mechanism and to jointly promote the ninth Review Conference of the Convention, to be held next year, in order to achieve substantive results.

Mr. Gusman (Azerbaijan): It is regrettable that we are compelled once again to take time away from the First Committee's agenda to refute the distortions of the Armenian delegation of the basic facts, causes and consequences of the conflict, as well as its distortions of Azerbaijan's right to self-defence. I will be very brief.

It is a matter of fact that Armenia targeted cities and civilians in Azerbaijan with missiles and artillery far from the conflict zone. It is a matter of fact that Armenia was and remains complicit in the deaths of civilians due to landmines in the liberated territories. It is a matter of fact that Armenia was caught red-handed when its use of prohibited munitions and military equipment, which were left behind by its retreating and deserting forces, proved its non-compliance with international obligations.

It is a particularly ironic matter of fact that it is Armenia that glorifies convicted Nazi war criminals. It is a matter of fact that the statement made by the delegation of Armenia directly contradicts the letter and spirit of communications and commitments made by the Prime Minister of Armenia, whose signature on the trilateral statement of 10 November 2020 indicated ostensibly the readiness of Armenia to proceed with constructive dialogue with regard to the restoration of economic and transport links in the South Caucasus.

This is the last statement we will make on the matter.

The Chair: The Russian Federation has requested the floor to make a second statement in the right of reply. After consulting the Secretariat, I would like to state the following.

The established practice of the United Nations is that one right of reply only is to be made in response to all statements delivered during the general debate. It is possible to make a second right of reply, but the established practice is for it to be made in response to a statement delivered after the delegation has made its first right of reply.

(spoke in French)

I would therefore like to ask the representative of the Russian Federation for his usual understanding and cooperation.

Mr. Balouji (Islamic Republic of Iran): I did not intend to take the floor unless we heard further baseless accusations by the representative of Saudi Arabia against Iran. I am therefore compelled to categorically reject those accusations once again.

In order to reaffirm the truth in our statement (see A/C.1/76/PV.4), I would like to recall once again what I mentioned, namely, that Saudi Arabia is refusing to implement its Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement. The secretariat of the International Atomic Energy

Agency has long requested that Saudi Arabia adhere to those agreements, yet it has failed to do so. It is imperative that Saudi Arabia comply, given its ambitious nuclear programme, but that issue is still pending.

Regarding the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), Iran's decisions and actions are totally consistent with our commitments under the JCPOA, especially its paragraphs 26 and 36, which allow a reduction of our commitments if more sanctions are introduced and imposed.

One last point is that Saudi Arabia claims to want to bring about peace by bombing other countries and defenceless people. Saudi Arabia is defending the indefensible. Peace and stability cannot be created by relying on foreign or extraregional forces.

To give an example of Saudi Arabia's irresponsible policy, I would like to refer to some figures distributed by some of the world's most credible institutions. Saudi Arabia was the third-largest military spender worldwide in 2018, and the fifth-largest in 2019. Its militaristic policies and excessive imports of the most sophisticated weaponry are among the main sources of insecurity and instability in the region. Saudi Arabia is responsible for all those atrocities in the region.

Mr. Moharram (Saudi Arabia) *(spoke in Arabic)*: I did not intend to ask for the floor a second time, but I would like to clarify the point raised by the representative of Iran concerning the Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement, which the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia signed and ratified in 2009 and which stipulates that certain arrangements should be undertaken between the State and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Once those arrangements have been finalized, the State informs the IAEA of their implementation.

I would also like to again call upon Iran to follow the example of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia by implementing its international commitments and ceasing its support for militias acting outside the law to destabilize security and stability in the States of the region.

The Chair *(spoke in French)*: We have exhausted the time available for this meeting. Before we adjourn, let me remind delegations that the list of speakers for the thematic debate will close on Tuesday, 12 October at 6 p.m. All delegations intending to take the floor during the thematic debate should inscribe themselves on the list.

An exchange with the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs will be held tomorrow morning at 10 a.m. in the form of a virtual meeting via Zoom. The meeting will be followed by a debate with civil society.

The sixth plenary meeting of the First Committee will be held on Monday, 11 October at 10 a.m. in these combined conference rooms. We shall continue with

the general debate on all disarmament and related international security agenda items. I appeal to all delegations to be punctual to enable us to proceed with our work in a timely manner.

Finally, I would like to thank the interpreters for their patience.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.