



General Assembly

Seventy-seventh session

First Committee

20th meeting

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New York

Official Records

Chair: Mr. Pieris(Sri Lanka)

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

Agenda items 90 to 108 (continued)

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

The Chair: In accordance with the programme of work, the Committee will first hear a briefing by the Chair of the Open-ended Working Group on Security of and in the Use of Information and Communications Technologies 2021–2025, His Excellency Mr. Burhan Gafoor of Singapore, whom I warmly welcome to the podium today.

Following Ambassador Gafoor's statement, the Committee will change to an informal mode to afford delegations the opportunity to ask questions. Immediately thereafter, the formal plenary will resume to allow the Committee to continue its thematic discussion under the cluster "Regional disarmament".

I would also like to remind delegations that the meeting will be suspended at 12.30 p.m. today in order to follow the yearly tradition of accommodating the presentation ceremony of the United Nations Disarmament Fellowship certificates.

I now give the floor to Ambassador Gafoor.

Mr. Gafoor (Singapore): At the outset, let me acknowledge the stellar work that you, Sir, have been doing as Chair of the very important First Committee and for your leadership in steering the Committee's

work in very challenging times. It is my pleasure to brief the First Committee today in my capacity as Chair of the Open-ended Working Group on Security of and in the Use of Information and Communications Technologies 2021–2025.

The Open-ended Working Group has convened three substantive sessions thus far, in December last year, as well as in March and July of this year. The first two substantive sessions, in December 2021 and March 2022, were marked by extensive debate over the issue of stakeholder modalities. Subsequently, Member States were able to agree on a set of modalities for stakeholders that I had proposed in my capacity as Chair, and which the Open-ended Working Group subsequently adopted at the third substantive session in July. Over the course of the three substantive sessions, delegations also had a robust exchange of views on all six pillars of the Working Group's mandate as set out in resolution 75/240. The pillars are existing and potential threats; rules, norms and principles of responsible State behaviour; international law; confidence-building measures; capacity-building and regular institutional dialogue. The First Committee will also recall that resolution 75/240 further mandated the Working Group to submit annual progress reports for adoption by consensus. With the shared objective of achieving positive, action-oriented outcomes, Member States engaged in constructive discussions on the various thematic areas. I am pleased to inform the Committee that the constructive approach taken by all delegations led to the successful adoption by consensus at the third substantive session in July 2022 of the Open-ended Working Group's first annual progress report.

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I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the delegations in the First Committee, and through them their respective officials, capitals and Governments, for the very constructive approach that they took and their commitment to working together in a spirit of consensus.

Let me now give members a brief overview of the annual progress report, which reflects all six pillars of the Open-ended Working Group's mandate, with each of their respective sections made up of two substantive parts. The first part reflects the discussions that Member States had on the topic, while the second recommends the steps that Member States should take next to move forward, including identifying areas for focused discussions under each pillar at the fourth and fifth substantive sessions in 2023.

Specifically, the threats section notes the increase in incidents involving the malicious use of information and communications technologies (ICTs) by State and non-State actors, as well as the implications of harmful ICT activity on various fronts, including critical infrastructure. It also indicates that Member States should continue to exchange views on existing and potential threats to ICT security and possible cooperative measures to address such threats. The sections on norms, international law, confidence-building measures, capacity-building and regular institutional dialogue reflect non-exhaustive lists of various concrete and action-oriented proposals, which will require further in-depth discussions at future substantive sessions. In addition, one concrete initiative reflected in the section on confidence-building measures is an agreement to establish a global intergovernmental points-of-contact directory. Accordingly, there was agreement that Member States should engage in further focused discussions on the development of such a directory at the fourth and fifth substantive sessions.

The Secretariat is already in the middle of collating views from States on the idea of such a global intergovernmental points-of-contact directory. We will use that collation as the basis for a background information paper to be disseminated in January 2023. I also understand that the Secretariat is prepared to give a presentation on its preliminary findings during the informal intersessional meeting that I intend to convene in New York from 5 to 9 December. There are many specific technical details that will have to be considered before the idea of such a directory can be operationalized. It will be up to the Open-ended

Working Group to elaborate on those details, and it is my intention to begin work on that important task as soon as possible. As I mentioned, I have also informed delegations that I will be convening intersessional meetings in December so that Member States can hold discussions on confidence-building measures, as part of the recommended next steps in the annual progress report. At the informal intersessional meeting, Member States will also have the opportunity to dive into deeper discussions on the other pillars of the Open-ended Working Group's mandate. And it is my hope that the informal intersessional meeting in December will help lay the groundwork to facilitate progress on the various issues and prepare for the substantive sessions in March and July of 2023.

I have said many times that the Open-ended Working Group is in itself a confidence-building mechanism, and in that context, the annual progress report serves as an important road map for ensuring that the Open-ended Working Group remains effective, constructive and productive, and that it functions for the benefit of all Member States. It is my hope that guided by the annual progress report, Member States will continue to work together constructively to implement the agreed outcomes and hold focused discussions on areas where we can find and build further convergence.

In that regard, Singapore has submitted draft decision A/C.1/77/L.54 for the Committee's consideration under agenda item 94. The draft decision is designed to seek the General Assembly's endorsement of the annual progress report. In my view, the adoption of the draft decision by consensus will strengthen and reinforce the consensus reached at our third substantive session in July. I also want to take this opportunity to share with the Committee my view that every delegation has participated actively and constructively in the work of the Open-ended Working Group, for which I am deeply grateful. But it is also my view that every delegation has the continuing responsibility to build and strengthen the spirit of consensus that has so far fortunately characterized the work of the Open-ended Working Group. While I say that is very fortunate, it is not a state of affairs that can be taken for granted. It will require the continued active and constructive participation of all delegations to build and strengthen the spirit of consensus.

I would therefore like to call on all delegations to reach out to other delegations, talk to one another and make an effort to understand one another. Ultimately,

achieving consensus will depend on building trust and confidence, and based on that trust and confidence, being able to find convergences and, if necessary, make some compromises to achieve mutually beneficial outcomes for all countries. A consensus outcome can be achieved only if all delegations are able to demonstrate flexibility. It is my hope that when the Open-ended Working Group next reconvenes in December for the informal intersessional meeting and in March 2023 for the substantive session, we will all be able to work together and continue our spirit of positive engagement and constructive partnership in order to build trust and confidence and achieve consensus outcomes. I would also like to urge all Member States to participate actively in the next meetings of the Open-ended Working Group in New York, including at the upcoming informal intersessional meeting in December. It is also my intention to use the informal intersessional meeting, as well as subsequent meetings, to continue to give regional organizations and the relevant stakeholders the opportunity to enrich our work by sharing their valuable knowledge and perspectives.

Let me conclude by once again thanking all members of the First Committee and, through them, their delegations in New York and officials in capitals for their active and constructive participation in the Open-ended Working Group. I look forward to continuing to work with all members in ensuring the success of the Open-ended Working Group so as to fulfil our shared vision of an open, secure, stable, accessible and peaceful ICT environment.

The Chair: In keeping with the established practice of the Committee, I will now suspend the meeting to afford delegations the opportunity to have an interactive discussion on the briefing that we just heard through an informal question-and-answer session.

The meeting was suspended at 10.20 a.m. and resumed at 10.35 a.m.

The Chair: The Committee will now take up the cluster “Regional disarmament and security”. We have a long list of speakers for the cluster. I therefore appeal for the full cooperation of all delegations.

Ms. Sulaiman (Brunei Darussalam): I have the honour of delivering this statement on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

ASEAN recognizes the extensive challenges posed by the geopolitical and geostrategic shifts in the region,

which have exacerbated the underlying traditional and non-traditional security issues, the social and economic ramifications of the coronavirus disease and other transboundary challenges. As such, strengthening ASEAN centrality and unity through ASEAN-led mechanisms, such as the East Asia Summit, the ASEAN Regional Forum and the ASEAN Defence Ministers’ Meeting Plus, remains a priority for the region.

We are committed to promoting an enabling environment for peace, stability and prosperous development. We also recognize the significance of taking a multilateral approach to tackling pressing common regional and global issues, as well as upholding a rules-based regional order, anchored in international law. It is in that spirit that ASEAN continues to emphasize the importance of strengthening efforts to address common regional challenges in a strategic and holistic manner, including in the area of non-proliferation and disarmament.

ASEAN firmly believes that the total elimination of nuclear weapons is the only way to guarantee against their use and threat of use. We strongly support the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), which is the cornerstone of the global regime for nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and the peaceful use of nuclear energy. ASEAN also notes that the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons is a historic agreement, which contributes towards global nuclear disarmament and complements other existing nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation instruments, including the NPT, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and nuclear-weapon-free zone treaties.

Related to that, we call on nuclear-weapon States to fulfil their obligations to advance nuclear disarmament, in accordance with the article VI of the NPT, and to recognize the need to completely eliminate nuclear weapons, which remains the only way to guarantee that nuclear weapons are never again used under any circumstances.

For ASEAN’s part, we emphasize our commitment to preserving South-East Asia as a nuclear-weapon-free zone, as enshrined in the Treaty on the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone (SEANWFZ Treaty) and the ASEAN Charter. We recognize that the SEANWFZ Treaty contributes to the objectives of the NPT. As we celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the entry into force of the SEANWFZ Treaty this year, we stress the importance of its full and effective implementation.

ASEAN agreed to extend the Plan of Action to Strengthen the Implementation of the SEANWFZ Treaty for another five years, from 2023 to 2027. ASEAN reaffirms its commitment to continuously engaging with nuclear-weapon States and intensifying the ongoing efforts of all parties to resolve all outstanding issues, in accordance with the objectives and principles of the SEANWFZ Treaty.

Just like the SEANWFZ, we recognize the importance of regional nuclear-weapon-free zones, and we therefore continue to support the ongoing efforts towards the establishment of such zones, especially in the Middle East. We also stress the importance of continued peaceful dialogue among all the parties concerned towards realizing lasting peace and stability on a denuclearized Korean peninsula.

ASEAN has also contributed to regional security through its work to promote the peaceful use of nuclear energy. We commend the ASEAN Network of Regulatory Bodies on Atomic Energy (ASEANTOM), including through the ninth Annual Meeting of the ASEANTOM in August 2022, for its efforts in enhancing cooperation among the nuclear regulatory bodies and further strengthening nuclear safety, security and safeguards in the region. We also look forward to the implementation of the ASEAN protocol for emergency response preparedness to a nuclear or radiological emergency, which was endorsed by the ASEAN Senior Officials Meeting in September 2021.

Furthermore, we welcome the progress on the implementation of the Practical Arrangements between ASEAN and the International Atomic Energy Agency on cooperation in the areas of nuclear science and technology and applications, nuclear safety, security and safeguards, which were signed in September 2019.

In addition to the work of the ASEANTOM, ASEAN notes that this year marks the fiftieth anniversary of the signing of the Biological Weapons Convention, and we reaffirm our commitment to that landmark treaty. We also give great importance to enhancing international cooperation, assistance and exchanges in toxins, biological agents, equipment, and technology for peaceful purposes. In that regard, we welcome the successful conduct of the ARF table-top exercise on response capabilities to chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear incidents, held in Manila on 13 to 15 June 2022. We also commend the achievements of the Network of ASEAN Chemical,

Biological and Radiological Defence Experts to foster greater regional cooperation in this domain.

Overall, ASEAN reaffirms its commitment to the obligations of disarmament treaties to which ASEAN member States are signatories, and it values regional platforms and dialogues to facilitate the implementation of our commitments in a balanced manner. We hope our efforts can further the goal of achieving global disarmament and a world without nuclear weapons and towards advancing our objectives in promoting international peace and security.

Mr. Al-Taie (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, the Group of Arab States associates itself with the statement made on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (see A/C.1/77/PV.19).

The Arab Group wishes to recall that many General Assembly resolutions, the conclusions of its special session on disarmament and the recommendations of the United Nations Disarmament Commission have all been reached by consensus. The Group highlights the links between disarmament and the maintenance of international peace and security, and between disarmament and the achievement of sustainable development. Moreover, several resolutions and documents of the United Nations stress the importance of disarmament and arms control at the regional level.

There is no doubt that the Middle East is one of the regions of the world that needs greater efforts to bolster disarmament and arms control so as to build confidence, achieve peace and increase security, and to create a stable basis for sustainable development. The Arab Group stresses the crucial importance of the conventions establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones throughout the world, including in the Middle East. In that regard, the Arab Group emphasizes the need to adopt effective and immediate measures to that end, which is what the annual draft resolution submitted by the Arab Group entitled "The risk of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East" (A/C.1/77/L.2) explicitly calls for. We hope that the international community and those States that wish for peace and stability will continue to support this important draft resolution as they have done in previous years.

The Arab Group also calls on the three States that co-sponsored the resolution on the Middle East adopted by the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) to shoulder their responsibility

for implementing the resolution, which is an integral part of the indefinite extension of the NPT. All efforts will be made to ensure the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East, and to bolster peace, security and stability in one of the most unstable and conflict-ridden areas of the world.

In that regard, the Arab Group welcomes the holding in November 2019 of the first session of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Weapons of Mass Destruction, presided over by our sisterly country, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, in accordance with decision 73/546. We welcome the success of that session and the adoption of many substantive and procedural decisions, as reflected in the report of the Secretary-General (A/75/63).

The Arab Group also welcomes the holding of the second session of the Conference, presided over by the sisterly State of Kuwait. That session adopted the working methods of the Conference, established an informal committee for intersessional negotiations and issued an outcome report. The Arab Group looks forward to the holding in November of the third session, to be presided over by the sisterly Lebanese Republic. We call on all those invited to that Conference to participate in good faith and negotiate a legally binding treaty that would promote peace and security at both the regional and international level.

The Arab States have carried out their responsibilities with respect to ensuring security and stability in the Middle East and the establishment of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction. Other States must also fulfil their responsibilities. In that context, the Arab Group expresses its great concern about the continued danger resulting from Israel's continuous refusal to join the NPT. Israel is the only State in the Middle East not to have joined that Treaty and to have refused to place its nuclear installations under the comprehensive safeguards system of the International Atomic Energy Agency. The Arab Group reaffirms that the continued delay in the implementation of the international commitment set forth in the resolution on the creation of a zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East represents a step backwards for nuclear disarmament and hinders progress towards non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction at the global level and achieving security in the region.

The Arab Group hopes that the results of the third session of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Weapons of Mass Destruction will move negotiations forward so as to create such a zone that would fulfil the security interests of all without discrimination, in accordance with the purposes and principles of the United Nations and the agreed commitments in that regard.

The Chair: I now give the floor to the representative of the European Union, in its capacity as observer.

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

In the face of rising levels of violent conflict, as well as threats to use force around the world, repeated blatant violations of the Charter of the United Nations and international law, coupled with a pervasive culture of impunity, there is a need for a new and stronger approach to global peace and security, anchored in multilateralism, human rights, fundamental freedoms and international law. Threats to the sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of any State, under any pretext, are a threat to us all and cannot be tolerated. To allow that to go unchallenged would mean accepting an international order based on the use of force. Russia's unprovoked, unjustified and illegal war of aggression is one of the greatest challenges to global peace and security, undermining the international rules-based order, damaging the global economy and global food security in ways that harm all countries. The recent military mobilization by Russian authorities is an unprecedented escalation in Russia's war against Ukraine.

The EU condemns Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and the atrocities being committed by Russian forces. It urges Russia to immediately stop its indiscriminate attacks against civilians and civilian infrastructure and to immediately, completely and unconditionally withdraw all its troops and military equipment from the entire territory of Ukraine, within

its internationally recognized borders. Russia bears full responsibility for the loss of life, human suffering and the destruction it causes in Ukraine. There can be no impunity for war crimes. Perpetrators must be held to account. The EU also condemns in the strongest possible terms the involvement of Belarus in the ongoing war of aggression against Ukraine and calls on Russia and Belarus to abide by the resolutions of the General Assembly on Russian aggression against Ukraine. Those resolutions sent a powerful message to Russia and Belarus that they are isolated in their actions.

At the same time, the EU hails the courage and determination of the Ukrainian people and its leadership in their fight to defend the sovereignty, territorial integrity and freedom of their country. The EU is unwavering in its commitment to help Ukraine exercise its inherent right of self-defence, as stated in the Charter of the United Nations, against the Russian aggression and build a peaceful, democratic and prosperous future. In that regard, it will continue to work closely with international partners.

The changing nature of conflict, the proliferation of armed groups and growing violence cause enormous pain and suffering and deeply affect the lives of men, women, boys and girls across the globe. Whenever peace recedes and armed conflicts destabilize States and entire regions, we all often face direct or indirect consequences and new security challenges. The EU has a long history of support for actions that address threats to international and regional security and promote disarmament. Regional partnerships are critical for addressing regional security issues and concerns and a fundamental factor for the development of regional dialogue that can facilitate confronting issues of common interest. Preventing and tackling security risks linked to arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation remains on the EU's radar screen.

The diversion, illicit trade and unauthorized use of conventional arms, especially small arms and light weapons (SALW) and their related ammunition, continue to constitute a serious impediment to global peace, security and sustainable development. The EU continues its engagement in addressing illicit small arms, as they endanger regional stability in various parts of the globe.

The majority of assistance projects supported by the EU can be considered classic SALW-control projects. Most of them have a regional scope and are

implemented with the help of regional organizations. In Africa, the EU has worked together with the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States, the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa and the Regional Centre on Small Arms. In Europe, the EU works with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the South Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons, which is part of the United Nations Development Programme, including through support for the implementation of the road map for a sustainable solution to arms control in the Western Balkans by 2024. In Latin America, the EU works with the Organization of American States and the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean. The EU also supports combating the illicit trade in, and proliferation of, SALW in the member States of the League of Arab States.

Other EU projects enable capacity-building for arms export control, which is crucial in preventing SALW from falling into the wrong hands. The EU supports States, at their request, to strengthen their arms transfer control systems with a view to implementing the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT). The activities under the project take place across the globe and include assistance for drafting legislation, training and sharing of best practices among export control professionals. In addition, the EU, through the ATT implementation support programme, has provided technical assistance to a good number of beneficiary countries in Latin America, Africa, Central and Southeast Asia, Eastern Europe and the Caucasus, aiming at strengthening their national systems, in line with the requirements of the Treaty.

The disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) of former combatants is essential in stabilization and building lasting peace. It can prevent further exploitation of grievances and instability stirred by armed groups. DDR is therefore an integral part of the EU's contribution to the non-recurrence of violence and to broader stabilization, as it addresses the risks posed by armed groups and supports the transition from armed confrontation to political engagement and inclusive governance.

The EU's experience has shown the need for early engagement with a long-term perspective, flexibility and a capacity to react swiftly, connecting diplomacy, development, peace, security and defence efforts in

high-risk contexts. To meet the challenges posed by armed groups and to maximize the impact of its actions, the EU decided to update its DDR policy, drawing on the European Union Global Strategy and its comprehensive approach to external conflicts and crises.

Furthermore, the EU extends its cooperation with various partners on strengthening biosafety and biosecurity against the backdrop of the ongoing coronavirus disease pandemic. In the interest of time, I will end here, with a shortened version of the statement.

Mr. Parnohadiningrat (Indonesia): Indonesia aligns itself with the statements made on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/77/PV.19) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

Disarmament efforts taken at the regional level are an important step to strengthen the global nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation architecture. Allow me, therefore, to raise four important points on this cluster.

First, nuclear-weapon-free zones are indispensable in order to reach the ultimate goal of achieving nuclear disarmament. Nuclear-weapon States should provide unconditional assurances against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons to all States of the zones, under any circumstances. Against that backdrop, Indonesia calls upon all nuclear-weapon States to ratify related protocols to all treaties establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones. Nuclear-weapon States should also withdraw any unilateral reservations or interpretative declarations that are incompatible with the purposes of the zones. Indonesia is also of the view that every non-nuclear-weapon State has an important role to ensure that their territory and region will not in any way be used in contravention of the objective of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

Secondly, reaffirming the role of nuclear-weapon-free zones as essential building blocks to global disarmament and non-proliferation architecture is vital. With that in mind, Indonesia is committed to preserving Southeast Asia as a zone free from nuclear weapons and all other weapons mass of destruction. That is enshrined in the ASEAN Charter and in and the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone (SEANWFZ) Treaty. Our commitment to fully implement the SEANWFZ Treaty also extends to the outstanding issues of accession of the nuclear-weapon States to the Protocol of the SEANWFZ Treaty. Next year, Indonesia will resume its

chairship of ASEAN. Together with ASEAN countries, Indonesia will continue working to intensify efforts towards the accession of nuclear-weapon States in accordance with the objectives and the principles of the SEANWFZ Treaty. That includes our commitment to the newly extended plan of action to strengthen the implementation of the Treaty for the period from 2023 to 2027.

Thirdly, the extension of the areas of the world that are free from nuclear weapons should be further promoted. We need to pursue the establishment of new nuclear-weapon-free zones in regions where they do not exist, including in the Middle East. In that regard, Indonesia welcomes the successful convening of the two sessions of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction and looks forward to the upcoming third session of the Conference. Indonesia hopes that the meeting will yield stronger commitments by the parties to achieve their goals.

Fourthly, regional disarmament efforts should be supported as part of endeavours to maintain international peace and security. The complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization of the Korean peninsula should serve as our common objective. There is no alternative to a peaceful solution to resolve the crisis on the Korean peninsula. On the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), Indonesia would also like to reiterate its call on all relevant parties to uphold their commitments under that landmark agreement. We look forward to progress in the negotiations to preserve the JCPOA.

No effort should be spared in promoting nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation in all their aspects. To that end, rest assured of our delegation's commitment to realizing the vision of a world free of nuclear weapons.

Mr. Elhomosany (Egypt): Egypt aligns itself with the statements delivered on behalf of the Group of Arab States and the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/77/PV.19) and wishes to make the following remarks.

The Middle East remains one of the most volatile regions in the world. The situation continues to worsen, with the unprecedented spread of conflicts, proxy wars, terrorism and sectarian violence. To quote from the final document of the first Special Session devoted to

Disarmament, which was adopted by consensus by the General Assembly in 1978:

“Enduring international peace and security cannot be built on the accumulation of weaponry ... nor be sustained by a precarious balance of deterrence or doctrines of strategic superiority. Genuine and lasting peace can only be created through ... the speedy and substantial reduction of arms and armed forces”. (*resolution S-10/2, para. 13*)

There is a need to recognize that peace and security cannot be achieved in the Middle East by deterrence and the accumulation of weaponry instead of engagement on the establishment of an equitable and effective security architecture that achieves the collective and collaborative security of all the States and peoples of the region. Serious steps towards the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East could have saved the region and the world from devastating wars and horrors, as well as from chronic country-specific proliferation concerns.

Egypt strongly welcomes the successful convening of the first session of the Conference on the Establishment of a Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction in the Middle East, under the presidency of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, at which a political declaration was adopted. We also welcome the convening of the second session of the Conference under the presidency of the State of Kuwait, at which the rules of procedure and an outcome report were adopted and an informal working committee for intersessional consultations was established. We look forward to the third session of the Conference, to be held in November under the presidency of the Republic of Lebanon.

In addition to its commitment to achieving lasting and just peace in the Middle East, Egypt has constructively engaged with all international efforts aimed at addressing the challenges related to arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation in the region. Continuing to ignore the severity of the deteriorating security conditions in the region will lead only to further catastrophic consequences. The region is already witnessing a new chapter of a gravely alarming arms race. We cannot continue to stand idly by and watch with hands tied. We urge all Member States to engage with the ongoing efforts and to honour the relevant previous agreements and undertakings.

Missing another opportunity to engage in a constructive, inclusive and consensus-based process will serve only to perpetuate the violence and chaos.

Ms. Petit (France) (*spoke in French*): France aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union and wishes to add the following remarks in its national capacity.

The regional dimension of our work is of great importance, and I would like to emphasize two points in that regard.

First, with regard to the European continent, we are concerned about the threats to the security architecture. We are witnessing the gradual erosion of the conventional arms control regime established in the 1990s in the framework of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the founding principles of which underpin the continent’s security. The three main pillars of that regime — the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe, the Vienna Document and the Treaty on Open Skies — have already been weakened and are now directly affected by the war in Ukraine. Those instruments were designed to strengthen mutual confidence, prevent tensions and minimize the risk of escalation. They are the concrete translation of the commitments we collectively undertook when we subscribed to the Helsinki Final Act in 1975 and the Charter of Paris for a New Europe in 1990. Yet, since its annexation of Crimea in 2014 and then the war of aggression it has waged against Ukraine since February with the support of Belarus, Russia has shown its contempt for the fundamental rules and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and its commitments at the level of the European continent, which govern relations between OSCE participating States. After years of circumventing and instrumentalizing its obligations and commitments under those confidence- and security-building measures, it has knowingly violated them by attacking Ukraine. Russia cannot shirk its continuing responsibilities and commitments.

Secondly, I would like to stress the importance of non-proliferation and disarmament initiatives at the regional and subregional levels, which are by nature complementary to those carried out at the global level. They contribute to international peace and security and stability. That is certainly the case, for example, in the prevention of, and fight against, illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons, given the largely

cross-border nature of such flows. In that area, regional and subregional cooperation must be encouraged. France supports the development of initiatives in that area, in particular in the Sahelo-Saharan zone, in the context of the fight against armed terrorist groups. It is also the case in the Western Balkans, where France and Germany founded a European Union-supported initiative to reduce firearms trafficking by 2024. That initiative is already a success, and the method on which it is based represents an interesting model for other regions. France also supports the efforts undertaken by the European Union and the OSCE to strengthen the prevention of, and fight against, illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons in order to develop best practices in their regulation and encourage assistance and cooperation in that area. To ensure the effectiveness of regional cooperation and assistance, we must establish our initiatives based on the expression of needs by the recipient States or institutions, and we must also ensure that there be effective coordination among the various initiatives. That is the basis of our approach, and we will continue our efforts in that direction.

Mr. Turner (United States of America): The United States has an enduring interest in promoting international peace and prosperity. Those goals are best achieved through strong partnerships and cooperation with regional and other intergovernmental organizations. Unfortunately, this year has seen increased threats to regional cooperation and global stability. Russia in particular, through its illegal and unprovoked war of aggression in Ukraine, has blatantly violated its obligations under the Charter of the United Nations and raised the spectre of nuclear brinkmanship. We condemn Russia's attacks against civilian infrastructure and cities across Ukraine in the strongest possible terms and demand that it withdraw all its troops and military equipment from Ukraine. Together with the General Assembly, we reject Russia's illegal attempts to seize its neighbour's land and property by force. We denounce Russia's seizure of the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant, the continued intimidation of the plant's Ukrainian staff and the unprecedented nuclear risks that Russia's actions have caused. We appreciate the extraordinary efforts of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to establish and maintain a continuing presence there.

The United States is committed to the centrality of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the ASEAN-led architecture in the Indo-Pacific.

That is why we sought a co-chairmanship role with Thailand and Sri Lanka for the ASEAN Regional Forum's intersessional meeting on non-proliferation and disarmament. We want to facilitate regular engagement and the advancement of measures to manage and reduce nuclear risks in the Indo-Pacific region. The United States remains deeply concerned about the People's Republic of China's increasing military, diplomatic and economic pressure campaign against Taiwan. We have an abiding interest in maintaining peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait, which is critical to global security and prosperity and a matter of significant international concern. In that context, we note the continued expansion of the nuclear force of the People's Republic of China, and we call on the People's Republic of China to provide transparency with regard to its capabilities and intentions.

We must also not lose sight of the serious nuclear proliferation challenges that continue to threaten regional and international security. Foremost among those is Iran's continued expansion of nuclear activities, including steps that have no credible civilian justification. Iran's continued nuclear escalations underline the importance of robust verification, which remains the foundation of any lasting deal, as well as the essential role of the IAEA. As called for by the IAEA Board of Governors, Iran must cooperate with the IAEA on an urgent basis to resolve all outstanding safeguards questions about possible undeclared nuclear material and activities without further delay. Meanwhile, Syria's persistent refusal to heed IAEA calls for cooperation to remedy its long-standing safeguards non-compliance has been ongoing for more than a decade and remains a matter of serious concern. We reiterate our call on Syria to cooperate fully with the IAEA to resolve all questions and concerns regarding the undeclared Deir ez-Zor reactor and related sites.

The United States remains prepared to engage in diplomacy with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea towards our objective of the complete denuclearization of the Korean peninsula. Our offer to meet without preconditions remains. The United States commitments to the defence of the Republic of Korea and Japan remain ironclad.

The United States supports nuclear-weapon-free zone treaties, which reinforce the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and regional security, and is working to advance the ratification of the protocols that it has signed. The

United States remains firmly committed to the goal of a Middle East zone free of weapons of mass destruction and delivery systems, based on consensus among all the countries of the region. We remain closely engaged with all regional parties and stand ready to actively support any initiatives to advance such a zone that achieve regional consensus.

There remain additional opportunities to demonstrate commitment to the First Committee's objectives. The United States remains strongly committed to the universal strength and longevity of the NPT. We were pleased that an overwhelming number of States parties were able to come together on a wide variety of issues that this year's NPT Review Conference, including the many who stressed the importance of nuclear-risk reduction. While not adopted, the draft final document provides a broadly accepted basis for meaningful progress and cooperation. Russia's last-minute decision to block consensus should not detract from what we have accomplished together.

The United States is strongly committed to the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda, which reinforces the disarmament agenda. We know the world is more peaceful, safe and prosperous when the human rights of women are respected, gender equality is prioritized, and women and girls can fully participate in economic, social and political life. Such increased participation leads to better and more sustainable outcomes, not only for women but for entire communities and countries. We regret the failure of the Conference on Disarmament to implement gender-sensitive language in its rules of procedures. Advancing international security, non-proliferation and disarmament requires equal participation and good-faith cooperation from all.

Despite the many current challenges, the United States remains committed to those disarmament and non-proliferation goals and is hopeful that the First Committee will continue to fulfil its vital role in that work.

Ms. McIntyre (Australia): Australia associates itself with the remarks delivered on behalf of the European Union and by the representatives of France and the United States with regard to Russia's illegal war in Ukraine.

Australia sees regional security as providing the building blocks for collective and cooperative international security. In the Indo-Pacific, we seek

a region that is peaceful, predictable and respectful of sovereignty and that is governed by transparency and accepted rules and norms, in which peoples can cooperate, prosper and be free from the risk of conflict. To that end, Australia is working actively with its partners through the relevant security architecture.

Australia attaches great importance to the development of nuclear-weapon-free zones, freely arrived at among the States of the region concerned, which make an important contribution to global nuclear disarmament. Australia was a key proponent of the Treaty of Rarotonga, which established the South Pacific Nuclear-Free-Zone in 1985. We are steadfast in our commitment to the Rarotonga Treaty, and unwavering in our support for the Pacific Island leaders' 2019 commitment to operationalizing it. We commend the efforts taken in other regions to form nuclear-weapon-free zones that assure the total absence of nuclear weapons from the territories concerned. In particular, we recognize the importance to our region of the Treaty on the Southeast Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone — the Bangkok Treaty — on preserving South-East Asia as a zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction.

Australia is deeply concerned about the destabilizing impact that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's ongoing development of its illegal nuclear and ballistic missile programmes is having on the Indo-Pacific region. Those tests are reckless: they threaten our security and that of our neighbours and partners. We urge the Democratic People's Republic of Korea not to resume nuclear testing and to comply fully with the relevant Security Council resolutions.

Australia reaffirms its strong commitment to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and ASEAN-led architecture, including the East Asia Summit and the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), as the anchor for Indo-Pacific regional security. Australia has the honour of being a comprehensive strategic partner of ASEAN. We are deepening our cooperation under that partnership, including in cyber security, maritime security and disaster response. Australia was a founding member of the ASEAN Regional Forum, an important platform through which its cross-regional membership promotes preventive diplomacy and develops cooperative measures to enhance nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. We welcome the progress made at the thirteenth ARF intersessional meeting on non-proliferation and disarmament held

in April and are pleased to be co-chairing, with the Philippines, an ASEAN Regional Forum workshop on nuclear risk reduction to be held in 2023.

Australia's enduring security partnership with our Pacific family, including through the Pacific Island Forum, is central to our region's collective security. Our security cooperation builds on a long history of Australian defence, policy and border management cooperation across the region, including through the Pacific Maritime Security Programme.

Australia welcomes the efforts of the International Atomic Energy Agency, the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA), the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and the Implementation Support Unit of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction (BWC) to run targeted regional meetings and workshops that help build capacity on disarmament and non-proliferation issues in a way that is relevant to the regional context. The regional preparatory meetings run by UNODA and the Implementation Support Unit of the BWC in advance of the BWC Review Conference this year are a good example of that. We also welcome the contribution of the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific and the regional centres of excellence, such as the Chemical Biological Radiological Nuclear Centre of Excellence in Southeast Asia, hosted by the Philippines.

Australia recognizes that our cybersecurity depends on the cybersecurity of our region and that of the wider international community. Australia is pleased to work with our partners in South-East Asia and the Pacific to improve their cyberresilience through targeted cyber capacity-building projects under our Cyber and Critical Tech Cooperation Programme. We are also pleased to sponsor women from our region for participation in the highly successful Women in International Security and Cyberspace Fellowship, and to support their participation, and our collective progress, in the Open-ended Working Group on Information and Communications Technologies.

In conclusion, we see regional and international security as two sides of the same coin. Australia will continue to work with our neighbours and partners in the region to address common security challenges and advance disarmament and non-proliferation efforts, so

that we can build the peaceful and prosperous region that we want.

Mr. Szewczuk (Poland): Poland fully associates itself with the statement delivered by the representative of the European Union in its capacity as observer. Let me highlight several fundamental issues in my national capacity.

The date of 24 February 2022 was a watershed moment for regional and global security architecture. Russia, a permanent member of the Security Council, breached the United Nations Charter and the most basic provisions of international law by launching a full-scale invasion on its peaceful neighbour, Ukraine.

Russia's brutal war of choice was a devastating blow to the security architecture based on international law and a regional set of measures that had guided relations in Europe and North America for a few decades. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), whose Chairmanship Poland has the honour to hold this year, was a guardian of the commitments to which all OSCE participating States, including Russia, subscribed.

By its aggression against Ukraine, Russia decided to launch a period of chaos and uncertainty. It came after years of Russia continuously undermining key frameworks constituting the system of regional security architecture. Russia withdrew from its commitments under the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe and the Open Skies Treaty. It undermined and circumvented provisions of the Vienna Documents on confidence- and security-building measures. Recent decisions by President Putin on the military mobilization and illegal annexation of Ukrainian territory, coupled with aggressive nuclear rhetoric and mass air strikes against civilian infrastructure, indicate that Russia prefers a path of escalation.

Acting in its role as the OSCE Chairmanship, Poland had done its utmost in the months before the Russian invasion to give diplomatic solutions a chance. Despite all those efforts, Russia decided to completely reshape the regional and international security order. Accordingly, exploring options to maintain an effective system of international arms control in the new circumstances is extremely difficult.

We are at a critical juncture. Russia's actions have weakened the overall credibility of arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation. Moreover, we already note spillover effects of the Russian aggression,

first and foremost across the OSCE space. The security situation in the OSCE region will be discussed in Łódź, Poland, during the Ministerial Council meeting at the beginning of December.

Finally, it should be said that responsibility for Russian actions also lies with Belarus, which has been actively facilitating Russia's military action by making its airspace, ground and infrastructure fully available to Moscow. If not for Minsk's support, Russia's aggression would have been limited, which means that the Belarusian leadership should be considered to be complicit with it. In this context, we need to prepare for a time of instability, with plenty of internal and international challenges ahead. We should remain realistic in our assessments, but we cannot afford to remain passive. We must actively defend the values and commitments to which we all subscribe.

Ms. Lipana (Philippines): My delegation aligns itself with the statements delivered by the representatives of Indonesia and Brunei Darussalam on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (see A/C.1/77/PV.19) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), respectively.

The international and regional components of the global governance regime are equally important to the enduring stability of an open, inclusive and rules-based international order that is governed by international law and informed by the principles of equity and of justice. This holds true in the area of disarmament and security.

Regional dynamics and the development of mechanisms and institutions to manage regional security architectures should inform the development of international norms. In our region, the centrality of ASEAN and ASEAN-led mechanisms has facilitated confidence-building and regional cooperation in a manner that is inclusive and responsive to region-specific nuances.

We remain committed to regional cooperation within the framework of ASEAN and ASEAN-led mechanism, including in the area of chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear (CBRN) response and nuclear-risk reduction. We recall the successful conduct of the table-top exercise on response capabilities to CBRN incidents, held by the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) in Manila on 13 to 15 June 2022, as well as the virtual ARF workshop on nuclear-risk reduction that the Philippines co-organized with Australia on 25 November 2020.

We reiterate the importance of mine action in national rehabilitation and sustainable development and welcome efforts to promote action in this area at both the global and regional levels. We commend the role of the ASEAN Regional Mine Action Centre as a centre of excellence in promoting ASEAN's efforts to address the issue of explosive remnants of war. While we appreciate the support of ASEAN's dialogue partners and external partners in that regard, we reiterate that assistance on mine action must be undertaken with a view to developing the independent national capacities of affected States.

In their joint communiqué issued in August 2022, the ASEAN Foreign Ministers noted the ongoing multilateral discussions on emerging issues involving international peace and security, including in outer space. ASEAN has been actively participating in the work of the Open-ended Working Group on Reducing Space Threats through Norms, Rules and Principles of Responsible Behaviours.

We reiterate our commitment to preserving South-East Asia as a region free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. Together with other ASEAN member States, we reaffirm our commitment to continuously engaging nuclear-weapon States and intensifying the ongoing efforts of all parties to resolve outstanding issues in accordance with the objectives and principles of the Bangkok Treaty. We support the exploration of ways to bridge differences, including the possibility of engaging with experts from nuclear-weapon States.

We encourage all nuclear-weapon States to continue to conduct dialogue between and among themselves and with non-nuclear-weapon States with a view to rapidly agreeing and implementing concrete measures of progress and targets to ensure further reductions in the global stockpile of all types of nuclear weapons, in order to eliminate them completely and diminish the risk of nuclear-weapons use. This must be done through every channel possible, including bilateral or trilateral consultation mechanisms.

We affirm that global and regional approaches to disarmament complement each other and should therefore be pursued simultaneously to promote regional and international peace and security. However, this complementarity is a two-way street; regional measures must also be complemented with adherence to global norms and frameworks. In the area

of nuclear weapons, we therefore underscore that the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons remains the cornerstone of the global disarmament, non-proliferation and peaceful uses regime. We call on all parties to accede to the Treaty and engage in a meaningful dialogue towards a world without nuclear weapons.

Mr. Zlenko (Ukraine): The delegation of Ukraine aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of the European Union in its capacity as observer. We would now like to make the following remarks in our national capacity.

Russia's unprovoked and unjustified aggression against Ukraine is the greatest challenge to international peace and security since the end of the Second World War. By launching a full-scale invasion against a sovereign nation, Russia has flagrantly violated not only the Charter of the United Nations and the whole international rules-based order but also all the existing arms-control regimes in Europe.

Throughout the last few weeks Russia has intensified its deliberate attacks against Ukraine's civilians and civilian infrastructure as well as critical Ukrainian energy infrastructure.

Since 10 October there have been about 300 missile and drone attacks by Russia targeting energy facilities in Kyiv, Zaporizhzhya, Dnipro, Zhytomyr, Lviv, Poltava, Vinnytsia and other Ukrainian cities.

As a result of those attacks, at least 17 civilians have been killed and 99 injured. Nearly 40 per cent of Ukraine's energy facilities have been damaged or destroyed. Power plants, central heating plants, transformers, oil-storage facilities, distribution devices, overhead power lines and other energy equipment throughout the country remain under Russian fire on almost a daily basis.

Against that background, according to our information Russia has also ordered about 2,000 Shahed unmanned aerial vehicles from Iran as well as missiles and other drones.

We also have information that Russia is deliberately laying the groundwork for a large-scale disaster in the south of Ukraine. Russian terrorists have mined the dam and aggregates of the Kakhovka hydroelectric power plant, one of the largest power facilities in Ukraine. Its dam holds about 18 million cubic metres of water. If Russian terrorists blow it up, more than 80 settlements,

including Kherson, where hundreds of thousands of people live, will be in an area of rapid flooding.

The Russian Federation has made numerous completely false and baseless allegations about the development of weapons of mass destruction in Ukraine. Just a few days ago, Russia launched a new wave of such false accusations, in particular about a so-called dirty nuclear bomb. We would like to stress that Ukraine is a committed party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). We have no dirty bombs or plans to acquire any.

Russia's lies are intended primarily to justify the full-scale war of aggression against Ukraine that it has unleashed. Russia is failing to achieve its goals on the battlefield and is becoming increasingly desperate.

Almost 28 years ago, Ukraine gave up its nuclear weapons arsenal in exchange for the security assurances confirmed by the United Kingdom, the United States of America and the Russian Federation in the Budapest Memorandum on Security Assurances in Connection with the Accession of Ukraine to the NPT.

The Budapest Memorandum was a crucial political and legal step taken by the young Ukrainian State within the framework of international efforts in the global process of nuclear disarmament. Ukraine has fully fulfilled its obligations within the Memorandum by implementing a complex of multifaceted nuclear disarmament measures. Later on, Russia brutally violated the provisions of the Budapest Memorandum.

It should also be clear that Russia made false statements about a radiation disaster at the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant. It is Russia that is using phosphorus munitions, banned antipersonnel mines and the entire arsenal of conventional weapons against civilians and civilian infrastructure.

In conclusion, the Russian Federation must immediately cease its aggression against Ukraine and unconditionally withdraw all its forces and military equipment from the entire territory of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders. That would serve as the first vital step towards restoring European security and stability, including the regional arms control architecture.

Mr. Mohammad Khan (Pakistan): The salience of regional approaches to regulate arms, build confidence and promote security has been consistently recognized by the international community. The General Assembly

continues to strengthen the mutually reinforcing correlation between international and regional peace, security and stability.

The Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, the United Nations Disarmament Commission (UNDC) guidelines of 1993 and the First Committee's resolutions have repeatedly reaffirmed the need for the simultaneous pursuit of regional and global approaches, including agreements in the area of disarmament and arms limitation. That complementarity of global and regional approaches to arms control is based on the recognition that most threats to peace and security arise among States located in the same region or subregion.

Accordingly, a number of core principles have been evolved and agreed at the United Nations to shape those approaches. Those principles include, first, the preservation of balance in the defence capabilities of States at the lowest level of armaments and military forces; secondly, the special responsibility of militarily significant States and States with larger military capabilities in promoting agreements for regional security; thirdly, the right to undiminished security; and, fourthly, the pursuit of disarmament measures in an equitable and balanced manner.

Several regions of the world have benefited from the application of those principles and guidelines in the areas of conventional arms-control risk reduction measures and confidence-building measures, particularly at the regional and subregional levels.

Over the years, confidence-building measures have proved their utility and efficacy in several regions and subregions, including in the area of arms control, disarmament and, more broadly, for international peace and security.

As the relevant General Assembly resolutions and UNDC guidelines have affirmed, confidence-building measures at the regional level have to be tailored to the specifics of the region and should begin with simple arrangements on transparency, openness and risk reduction before the concerned States find themselves in a position to pursue more substantive arms-control and disarmament measures.

However, regardless of the specificities of the various regions and the steps that the States concerned undertake for confidence-building, the ultimate aim of regional approaches should be to enhance regional

and global peace and security. Confidence-building measures are significant in that they can lead to the creation of favourable conditions for the peaceful settlement of existing international problems and disputes, and facilitate the resolution of any situation that might lead to international friction.

However, confidence-building measures should not become an end in and of themselves. They should be pursued in conjunction with earnest efforts for the peaceful settlement of disputes, in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. The peaceful settlement of disputes in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter and other concrete actions to ease regional tensions and build confidence among the States of the region can create a political environment conducive to promoting agreements on disarmament and arms limitation.

In the absence of progress towards eliminating underlying disputes and the causes of mistrust among States, the utility of confidence-building measures diminishes. Confidence-building measures alone cannot act as a substitute or a precondition for steps towards the peaceful settlement of disputes. A stable balance of conventional forces and weapons is necessary to ensure strategic stability, particularly in regions marked by tensions. Averting the possibility of a military attack launched by surprise and avoiding aggression remain important goals of conventional arms control.

For several years, Pakistan has led initiatives at the United Nations to promote the goals of regional disarmament, conventional arms control and confidence-building measures. The delegation of Pakistan will present draft resolutions in the Committee on regional disarmament, confidence-building measures in the regional and subregional context and conventional arms control at the regional and subregional levels (A/C.1/77/L.33, A/C.1/77/L.34 and A/C.1/77/L35). The draft resolutions recognize the significance of and complementarity between the regional and global approaches to arms control, disarmament and confidence-building in the promotion of international peace, security and stability. We look forward to the continued support of Member States for the adoption of those draft resolutions this year as well.

Mr. Vorontsov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Regional security in various parts of the world has been in a state of upheaval in recent years.

Tensions are rising, belligerent rhetoric is increasing and those from the so-called “planetary war” party are stepping up their activities. We are seeing existing protracted regional conflicts heating up, and fresh hotspots are emerging. Military alliances are expanding and becoming more aggressive, and the fundamental principle of the indivisibility of security is being flagrantly violated. The reason for the decline in military security in Europe is the policy of open confrontation with Russia pursued by the United States and its NATO allies, as well as the undermining of the foundations of European security and the demolition of a resilient and comprehensive system of arms control and confidence-building measures that has existed for many years and has proved to be effective.

NATO member States continue to build up their military potential close to Russia’s borders and are enhancing operational capabilities in terms of the eastward redeployment of forces. The aggressive policy pursued by the United States and its allies in post-Soviet countries, as well as their persistent backing of the neo-Nazi regime in Kyiv that for the ninth year now is continuing to kill the people of Donbas with active foreign support — all of that has compelled us to take the most decisive measures possible. For a long time we have made every effort to find a diplomatic and negotiated solution to the conflict, hoping that the West would keep to a prudent approach. However, it has done everything possible to deepen the divides and trigger a military operation.

At the same time, the United States is moving more weapons and intelligence into Ukraine. That is leading not only to protracted hostilities and fresh casualties but also to the dangerous prospect of direct military standoffs between Russia and NATO. The political and military leadership of Ukraine, with the encouragement of the United States, has begun to talk about the need to defeat Russia on the battlefield and, what is more, to dismember and destroy it.

Under such circumstances, we could not ignore the will of the population of the territories of Donbas and the liberated territories of Ukraine, which will face reprisals if militants from Kyiv return, which we have already seen. The President of Russia made the only possible decision to support the population of Donbas and the liberated territories of Ukraine and their desire to reject the authority of the neo-Nazi Government in Kyiv. The corresponding referendums took place from 23 to 27 September.

For many decades, the United States and its military-bloc allies have continued to disrupt and dismantle key agreements on arms control and confidence-building measures. In 2003, Washington unilaterally terminated the Soviet-American Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty. In the early 2000s, it refused to ratify the agreement on an adaptation of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe.

In that context, subsequent calls to increase transparency through the further modernization of the Vienna Document, which our Western colleagues have repeated over many years, seem at the very least insincere if not blatantly opportunistic. Following that, the United States adopted a course towards the destruction of the Open Skies Treaty, which led to its unilateral withdrawal under a far-fetched pretext.

We believe that under the current circumstances, it remains necessary to focus on the strict implementation of existing agreements, including the 2011 Vienna Document. It would be useful also to continue the implementation of other instruments for confidence-building and military predictability that have proved their effectiveness.

We have repeatedly proposed that we agree on de-escalation measures, including a reduction in military activities along the border of Russia and NATO countries, on a reciprocal basis and on the improvement of mechanisms for the prevention of incidents at sea and in the air, as well as dangerous military activities. We have also mentioned the need to extend the practice of concluding such bilateral agreements among all maritime and land-locked States that are members of NATO.

In that light, we are willing to maintain our pragmatic approach to our participation in the context of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe structured dialogue.

Mr. Kim Song (Democratic People’s Republic of Korea): Regional disarmament is of great significance in achieving comprehensive and complete disarmament as well as in ensuring international peace and security. It is encouraging that in many parts of the world efforts are being concentrated on creating and further consolidating nuclear-free zones and that bilateral and multilateral disarmament measures are actively being pursued to address mutual security concerns.

If regional disarmament is pursued without interruption and comes to fruition, that will undoubtedly lead to global disarmament, and the world will become more peaceful and stable. But in some regions, arms build-ups are being stepped up in pursuit of geopolitical purposes, even in the midst of a three-year-long pandemic crisis that has claimed millions of precious lives and caused tremendous human and material losses. That has given rise to great concern on the part of the international community.

The Korean peninsula is one of those regions. It is one of the hottest spots in the world, where the risk of war constantly looms owing to the territorial and national divisions caused by the 80-year-long military occupation of South Korea by the United Forces.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea has made and sustained efforts to implement numerous proposals for confidence-building and disarmament to defuse the acute security crisis on the Korean peninsula and to ensure lasting peace and stability. But the United States responded with a vicious, hostile policy towards the Democratic People's Republic of Korea as well as nuclear threats and blackmail, by conducting various kinds of joint military exercises against us in and around the Korean peninsula and introducing strategic assets and cutting-edge military hardware into South Korea.

In 1954, one year after the conclusion of the Korean armistice agreement, the United States staged a Focus Lens joint military exercise, the first of its kind. In recent years, the United States and South Korea have undertaken many joint military exercises with different code names against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea on the Korean peninsula and in its vicinity. Joint military drills numbered about 110 in 2018, more than 190 in 2019, more than 170 in 2020 and more than 140 in 2021.

In July, the United States deployed an F-35 stealth fighter in South Korea and a B-2 Spirit strategic bomber in Australia under the pretext of coping with an emergency on the Korean peninsula. From August through October, it staged Ulchi Freedom Shield joint military drills with South Korea. From September 26 to 29 through early October, the United States carried out joint maritime military exercises off the shores of the Korean peninsula with the participation of the *USS Ronald Reagan* nuclear-powered aircraft carrier. The United States is also overtly making dangerous moves that incite an arms race in the region, including nuclear

proliferation through AUKUS — the trilateral security pact between Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States — and armed sales to Taiwan worth billions of dollars.

Everything mentioned clearly shows that the United States is the main culprit that is undermining peace and stability on the Korean peninsula and in the rest of the North-East Asian region. That tells us that disarmament in the region can never be realized by unilateral efforts alone.

Based on the ideals of independence, peace and friendship, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea will in future strengthen relations of friendship and cooperation with those countries that take a friendly approach to us so as to create conditions and environment favourable to regional disarmament. By doing so, we will give an impetus to the process of global disarmament and fulfil our responsibilities and duties in the course of building a prosperous and peaceful world.

Ms. Lõhmus (Estonia): Estonia aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of the European Union.

Even as we speak, there is war in our region. There is war in Europe. Russia, a permanent member of the Security Council, continues its war of aggression against Ukraine despite the repeated condemnation of its actions by the General Assembly. The vote held on 12 October (resolution ES-11/4) is a powerful reminder of the fact that the overwhelming majority of nations stand in defence of the Charter of the United Nations and in resolute opposition to Russia's war against Ukraine and its people.

Territorial integrity is a central pillar of the United Nations, and Russia's violent contempt for Ukraine's national borders and sovereignty cannot and will not be accepted. Threats to the sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of any State, under any pretext, are a threat to us all. We urge Russia to immediately withdraw all its troops and military equipment from the entire territory of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders.

We deplore Russia's renewed campaign of missile and drone attacks to deliberately target civilians and civilian infrastructure across Ukraine. Those attacks, which are in clear violation of international humanitarian law, are carried out using weapons from

Iran. The respective transfers of weapons are violations of Security Council resolution 2231 (2015). We urge all nations not to assist the aggressor in such war crimes. We also condemn the further involvement of Belarus, which has now established a joint force with Russia in the ongoing aggression against Ukraine.

Russia's unprovoked aggression against Ukraine has changed the European security architecture. Even before the war, we did not see any readiness from the Russian side to show openness and transparency in its military activities, as enshrined in the various regional arms-control arrangements, including in the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. Today Russia has gone from selectively implementing its arms-control obligations to completely violating nearly all of them.

That is in stark contrast to the principles that Russia is promoting in its draft resolution entitled "Strengthening and developing the system of arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation treaties and agreements" (A/C.1/77/L.66). We call on Russia to recommit to those principles in practice and to return to fully implementing its arms-control, disarmament and non-proliferation obligations.

Mr. Hossain (Bangladesh): Bangladesh aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/77/PV.19).

Bangladesh acknowledges the critical importance of regional disarmament and security in the maintenance of international peace and security. We firmly believe that the global and regional approaches to disarmament complement each other and should therefore be pursued simultaneously to promote regional and international peace and security.

We subscribe to the notion that peaceful dialogue and diplomacy remain the best options for building a sound regional security architecture. Enhanced regional cooperation, including transparency and confidence-building measures, remains critical for meaningful dialogue. With that conviction, Bangladesh has been strongly advocating for the important role of regional disarmament in maintaining international peace and security.

As the Secretary-General outlined in his new agenda for peace, *Our Common Agenda* (A/75/982), we must work together to increase our efforts for regional

initiatives that can fill critical gaps in global peace and security. We further support his proposal to put women and girls at the centre of regional, national and local security policies.

We add our voice to those stressing the need to establish nuclear-weapon-free-zones (NWFZs) as an interim measure through the ratification of related protocols to all treaties establishing NWFZs by the nuclear-weapon States, in order to maintain sustainable peace, security and stability around the world.

Bangladesh reiterates its full support for the establishment in the Middle East of a zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction. In that regard, we welcome the convening of the first and second sessions of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction, in keeping with decision 73/546. We call upon all States in the region to actively participate in the third session of the Conference in the process of realizing the establishment of the zone.

Bangladesh also attaches high priority to giving unconditional and legally binding assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons by nuclear-weapon States.

Bangladesh recognizes the useful role played by the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific (UNRCPD) in regional disarmament. We encourage all three regional centres in Africa, Asia and the Pacific, and Latin America to engage meaningfully with both Government and non-Government stakeholders for the promotion of dialogue and confidence-building measures in the respective regions.

In the recent past, the UNRCPD has facilitated the process of identifying common elements of interest and concern among countries in our region during negotiations on certain disarmament treaties. We look forward to further expanding our partnership with the UNRCPD in fulfilment of, inter alia, the obligations under Security Council resolution 1540 (2004). Bangladesh remains open to opportunities for further learning from the good practices of other countries of the region in preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their possible acquisition by terrorists or other unauthorized non-State entities.

Bangladesh believes that disarmament education helps change the basic attitudes of people and

policymakers with respect to peace and security. Therefore, we request that UNRCPD further strengthen its efforts to promote and disseminate disarmament education and research in the region, drawing on the useful resources at its disposal. This year, too, we are happy to co-sponsor draft resolution A/C.1/77/L.9, on the regional centres, as we did in previous years.

Let me conclude by reaffirming Bangladesh's commitment to advancing regional disarmament issues together with our partners from the region and beyond, considering them as an essential and integral part of building a safer and better world for us all.

Mr. Balouji (Islamic Republic of Iran): My delegation associates itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/77/PV.19).

The number of active armed conflicts that took place in at least 46 States in 2021 is plainly shocking. Eight of those conflicts have erupted in the Middle East alone.

In this day and age, a regional security framework is now more than ever needed in our region. The region is on fire, so to speak, and the presence of extraregional players as well as interference in the region further exacerbate the situation.

To date, our region has been the scene of several wars, massive foreign military build-ups, the ensuing nightmare of extremism and terrorism and the dangerous accumulation of the most sophisticated weaponry, as well as aggression and power projections by various actors.

In the region itself, excessive military budgets and arms imports by certain States remain alarming. Unsurprisingly, the United States is the number-one arms seller to some countries of the region, including a country that is the largest buyer of such weaponry with military spending.

In that context, we must not condone the fact that the Israeli regime relies on military aid from the United States as well as the aggressive military establishment that it has created, which is a chronic source of insecurity in the region and beyond.

One of the greatest concerns is the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction in the region that we are facing. The Israeli regime is the only entity in the

region that has refused to accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological Weapons Convention. What is worse, it possesses nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction and threatens others with nuclear annihilation while enjoying the blanket support of the United States, despite its threats to regional peace and security.

On the subject of weapons, chemical weapons have been frequently and massively used in the region. The acute need for a region-wide comprehensive solution to the threat of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) in the Middle East, specifically the creation of a WMD-free zone based on NPT or General Assembly processes, is still facing an impediment in the form of the Israeli regime.

International figures such as the Secretary-General have been requested to hold consultations with Iran and Iraq as well as with other States of the region regarding measures to enhance the security and stability of the region. Iran has not only steadily supported regional security and offered some proposals to strengthen security in the region but also is ready to engage in the future consultations.

Regarding the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), it is crucial to note that the United States' withdrawal from it in 2018 and the current United States Administration's refusal to rejoin it have resulted in tremendous harm to global efforts towards nuclear non-proliferation. However, Iran has continuously upheld its commitments based on the JCPOA as well as the comprehensive safeguards agreement and has been cooperative with the International Atomic Energy Agency. Our nuclear programme is completely peaceful, and any allegation about or politicized approach to this matter by any country is rejected. The United States, with a history of sustained non-compliance with numerous accords, including the JCPOA, lacks any moral ground to make such unacceptable statements.

We refute any claims that Iran played a role in the war in Ukraine or reneged on its commitments, and our offer to clarify the issue at the expert level is still on the table.

Iran has the right to meet its security and military needs, including its need for missiles, in conformity with international law and as a sovereign member of the international community. By taking a politicized

approach, no individual or legal personality can deny us the realization of that right.

To conclude, we need collective efforts by the countries of the region to establish an inclusive dialogue and security networking in that region. To realize a balanced, active, and smart foreign policy, Iran pursues a courteous relationship with its neighbours.

Mr. Khaldi (Algeria): Algeria remains deeply committed to consolidating stability and security beyond its borders, working closely with neighbouring countries for a better future for all the peoples of the region.

The Sahel region is particularly plagued by the dangerous phenomenon of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, which in many countries has exacerbated the already fragile security situation. That calls, from our point of view, for a comprehensive and multidimensional response based on a security track and a political process to deal with the root causes of the various crises.

In that regard, Algeria continues to contribute to fostering the African Union's (AU) efforts to prevent and combat terrorism, including by hosting and supporting two key AU institutions, namely, the African Centre for Studies and Research on Terrorism, which aims to guide and coordinate counter-terrorism activities across Africa, and the AU police cooperation mechanism, the African Police Cooperation Organization, which constitute a significant asset in enhancing the capacity of the continent to address the threats posed by terrorism and transnational organized crime.

The establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones is not only a confidence-building measure but also a concrete step towards the complete and total elimination of nuclear weapons.

My country, which was among the first African States to sign and ratify the Treaty of Pelindaba, continues to provide strong support for its broad implementation. In that respect, Algeria calls upon the remaining States to sign and ratify the three protocols annexed to the Pelindaba Treaty.

Furthermore, my country reaffirms the vital importance of the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, which remains a legitimate demand and a priority for a sustainable peace both regionally and globally.

In that context, Algeria welcomes the successful convening in November last year of the second session of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction. We call on all invited parties to constructively participate in its third session, to be held in November, in order to negotiate a legally binding treaty that satisfies the implementation of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East.

The Algerian delegation welcomes the Secretary-General's report contained in document A/77/131, on "Strengthening of security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region", which contains some Member States' perspectives on ways and means to strengthen security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region. I take this opportunity to thank those Member States that have contributed to the implementation of resolution 76/65.

In line with its Mediterranean policy, based on the principles of cooperation, good-neighbourliness and mutual respect, Algeria has the honour, as in previous years, to submit to the First Committee and the General Assembly at this seventy-seventh session, under agenda item 104, draft resolution A/C.1/77/L.24, entitled "Strengthening of security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region". The Algerian delegation counts on the co-sponsorship and the support of all Member States for the adoption of that text, hopefully by consensus this year.

Lastly, my delegation associates itself with the statements delivered on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/77/PV.19) and the Group of Arab States under this cluster.

Ms. Osoba (United Kingdom): Regional stability, based upon a mutual understanding and respect for neighbours' responsibilities towards one another, is essential for global peace. We are concerned by the situation in several regions.

In Europe, the Russian Federation is conducting an unprovoked, premeditated and barbaric attack against Ukraine. President Putin's latest attempt to illegally annex Ukrainian territory is a further violation of international law and of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Russia's actions undermine its commitments under the Memorandum on Security Assurances in Connection with the Accession of Ukraine to the

Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, of 1994. Russia's disinformation about Ukraine and its partners, with unfounded allegations around chemical and biological weapons, is deplorable. The United Kingdom is deeply concerned by Russia's reckless endangerment of the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant, with a potentially catastrophic regional impact. We call on all countries to reject the referendums, to support Ukraine in defending its sovereignty and to call on Russia to de-escalate the situation, starting by ceasing its assault and by immediately withdrawing all of its forces from Ukraine.

That is the culmination of a pattern of aggressive and destabilizing behaviour by Russia against its neighbours in recent years. There have been two confirmed uses of Novichok nerve agents, in Siberia and Salisbury. Russia must account for those uses of a chemical weapon developed in the Soviet Union and Russia, including by giving genuine answers to basic questions; fully declare any chemical weapons to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW); and, finally, destroy them as required by the Chemical Weapons Convention.

In the Middle East, regional stability is worsened by Iran's behaviour, including its development of ballistic missiles, its provision of military and financial support to a range of actors in violation of Security Council resolutions, including its proliferation of missile technology throughout the region and its deeply concerning escalatory activity on its nuclear programme. Iran has taken unprecedented steps to accelerate the pace of its nuclear programme, producing enriched uranium, including highly enriched uranium, at an alarming pace. That escalation goes far beyond any plausible civilian justification. It is deeply concerning that Iran refused to seize the recent diplomatic opportunity to conclude the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action with continued demands beyond the scope of the deal.

Addressing the use of chemical weapons in Syria remains a serious and urgent concern. The OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism and the OPCW's Investigation and Identification Team have attributed responsibility to the Al-Assad regime for eight chemical-weapons attacks, with further attacks under investigation. After the Al-Assad regime failed to take the required action, State parties voted in April 2021 to suspend Syria's voting rights and privileges at the OPCW until it takes the necessary steps, including

resolving outstanding issues with its chemical-weapons declaration. We call on Syria to take those steps without delay.

The United Kingdom continues to support the creation of a Middle East zone free of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery, on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at by all the countries of the region. The United Kingdom attended the 2019 and 2021 Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction as an observer and voiced its reservations about the credibility of a process that does not include all States of the region. We were pleased that the majority of participants were constructive. Our view remains that such a process can succeed only if based on consensus and arrangements freely arrived at between all regions.

In Asia, the United Kingdom is concerned by the continued development of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's illicit nuclear and ballistic-missile programmes, demonstrated most recently with repeated range ballistic missile launches in September and October, in violation of Security Council resolutions. We call for the complete and verifiable denuclearization of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and urge it to engage in dialogue with the United States. Sanctions targeting the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's illicit programmes must continue to be strictly enforced by the international community.

The United Kingdom remains concerned about the potential for a misunderstanding between India and Pakistan. We encourage both parties to engage in dialogue to reduce the risk of miscalculation and to ensure that there is a robust channel that could be used to de-escalate tensions.

Our full statement will be posted online.

Mr. Ahmed (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, my country's delegation would like to align itself with the statements made on behalf of the Group of Arab States and of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/77/PV.19).

Iraq reaffirms its support for the efforts made to establish nuclear-weapon-free zones as an important step towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons and confidence-building at the regional level. Such zones could become decisive in promoting and supporting the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regimes.

Moreover, the creation of such zones would reflect values that many seek to adhere to so as to establish a world free of lethal nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction.

From that standpoint, efforts must be concerted in order to support all endeavours to create such zones so as to promote international and regional peace and security.

The resolution on the Middle East adopted in 1995 represents the fourth pillar of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and a foundation upon which the unlimited extension of the NPT has been decided. It also represents an important step towards enhancing the efforts to the creation of a nuclear-free-zone in the Middle East. That resolution should be in place until the achievement of its goals and objectives, as it is an integral part of the 1995 Review Conference of the Parties to the NPT.

Iraq reiterates its warning in relation to the consequences of continued procrastination in implementing the 1995 resolution as that would undermine the disarmament and non-proliferation regimes and also negatively affect the credibility of the NPT and its universality.

Iraq calls on the international community in general and the three sponsors of the Middle East resolution of 1995 in particular to fulfil their responsibilities and implement their obligations as regards the creation of a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East. The region is currently not free of nuclear weapons because it is not possible to verify the military capabilities of the Israeli nuclear installations, whereas all the nuclear installations of other States in the region, with the exception of the Israeli entity, are subjected to the oversight of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

Iraq believes that the creation of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East must go through certain preliminary steps, including the elimination of nuclear weapons by the Israeli entity and its accession to the NPT in addition to subjecting all of its nuclear installations to the IAEA Comprehensive Safeguards System, in accordance with Security Council resolution 487 (1981). Those steps are necessary to alleviate tensions so as to lead to the creation of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East.

In conclusion, Iraq calls for stepping up efforts to support the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction as per decision 73/546, of 2018. Iraq welcomes the outcomes of the first session of the Conference, presided over by the sisterly Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, and the second session, presided over by the sisterly State of Kuwait. Iraq calls on all relevant parties to ensure the success of the third session, to be held in November. We stress our position calling for such efforts to be undertaken in parallel to those of the United Nations, in accordance with the resolution on the Middle East adopted by the Review Conference of the Parties to the NPT in 1995 and the subsequent relative resolutions. .

Mr. Abd Aziz (Malaysia): Malaysia aligns itself with the statements delivered by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/77/PV.19) and by the representative of Brunei Darussalam on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

In the steady advance of the international community towards a world without nuclear weapons, nuclear-weapon-free zones (NWFZs) play a vital role in preventing any threat or use of such odious tools of war and destruction.

As the global disarmament and non-proliferation architecture confronts profound challenges, the NWFZs, underpinned by the treaties of Tlatelolco, Rarotonga, Bangkok and Pelindaba and the Treaty on a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Central Asia, as well as Mongolia's nuclear-weapon-free status, are essential in ensuring peace, security and sustainable development for all.

The continued relevance of such zones was vividly demonstrated at both the 2022 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the first Meeting of States Parties to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. At both meetings, States parties underlined the fact that such zones are critical elements in our collective endeavours to free the world from the long shadow cast by the continued possession of nuclear arsenals by a select few. The unprecedented failure of two consecutive NPT Review Conferences to adopt a substantive outcome further highlights the need for nuclear-weapon-free zones, particularly amid renewed

geopolitical tensions, increased nuclear rhetoric and strains on the multilateral system.

In our own region, this year marks the twenty-fifth anniversary of the entry into force of the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone (SEANWFZ) Treaty, or the Bangkok Treaty. Malaysia believes that the full promise of SEANWFZ and the ASEAN ideals that it represents cannot be realized until the Protocol to the Treaty is signed and ratified by the nuclear-weapon States. The absence of legally binding negative security assurances from the nuclear-weapon States does not augur well for regional peace and security.

Malaysia therefore reaffirms the imperative of intensifying the ongoing efforts of the States parties to the SEANWFZ Treaty and the nuclear-weapon States to resolve all outstanding issues in accordance with the objectives and principles of the SEANWFZ Treaty pertaining to the signing and ratifying of the Protocol to that Treaty at the earliest. Malaysia looks forward to continued dialogue between ASEAN and the nuclear-weapon States in that regard. A quarter century is precious time that we have already lost, and progress cannot be deferred indefinitely. We will continue to work with fellow ASEAN member States to maintain the integrity and credibility of the SEANWFZ, in line with the aspirations of ASEAN leaders.

Malaysia fully supports the goal of a zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East. We reaffirm the need for the prompt establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East in accordance with Security Council resolution 487 (1981), paragraph 14 of Security Council resolution 687 (1991) and the relevant General Assembly resolutions adopted by consensus. Also, we must not lose sight of the 1995 NPT resolution on the Middle East, which remains fully valid, and the special responsibility of the co-sponsor States in its implementation.

In line with decision 73/546, Malaysia welcomes the convening of the first session of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction, under the presidency of Jordan, in 2019, as well as the second session of the Conference, under the presidency of Kuwait, in 2021.

The regional dimension of disarmament and security issues across a range of areas warrants continued attention. We must redouble our efforts and

commit to urgent and resolute action to strengthen regional disarmament and security. Malaysia, together with our partners from South-East Asia and beyond, will remain actively engaged in multilateral discourse and initiatives that are crucial in navigating the challenges at hand.

Mr. Hamed (Niger) (*spoke in French*): My delegation aligns itself with the statements made by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/77/PV.19) and by the representative of the Federal Republic of Nigeria on behalf of the Group of African States (see A/C.1/77/PV.16) and wishes to make the following observations in its national capacity.

The Niger, like our neighbouring countries, is faced with the actions of criminal terrorist groups that are spreading death and destruction across the Sahelo-Saharan region. According to recent figures from the Africa Centre for Strategic Studies, the use of small arms and light weapons and improvised explosive devices by non-State armed groups have been causing an average of 1,500 victims per year in the central Sahel region in recent years.

It is clear, therefore, that 50 per cent of the victims of terrorism around the world are in sub-Saharan Africa. Successive reports of the Secretary-General tell us that small arms and light weapons continue to be a hindrance to peace and security and sustainable development. The armed conflicts in which they play a key role have become even more devastating and are having disproportionate and harmful effects on civilian populations, including women and children.

While we support the multilateral efforts deployed to combat that phenomenon, we believe that the proliferation of small arms and light weapons at the regional level continues to be a key issue in the context of peace and security in the Sahel. That is why my delegation supports all initiatives aiming to achieve more effective control over the illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons through monitoring and marking and the use of international tracing tools and all existing regulations, including the Arms Trade Treaty, which my country ratified on 24 June 2015. All those measures can contribute to preventing such weapons from falling into the hands of non-State armed groups, such as is the case currently in the Sahel.

The Niger, aspiring to contribute to the maintenance of international, regional and subregional peace and

security, has acceded to almost all legal instruments relating to conventional weapons and non-proliferation. The Niger also remains committed to all weapons-related recommendations and resolutions, including resolution 1540 (2004).

At the regional level, the Niger, on 11 April 1996, acceded to the Treaty of Pelindaba, on the creation of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Africa. We also acceded on 1 December 2000 to the Bamako Declaration relating to the proliferation and illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons, as well as the African Union's Silencing the Guns initiative.

At the subregional level, our country is a party to the Economic Community of West African States Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons, Their Ammunition and Other Related Materials, as well as to its Moratorium.

At the national level, in 1994 the Niger created a national commission for the monitoring and collection of illicit weapons in order to address the national imperatives on arms control. The commission was set up as a national authority and point of contact in the area of disarmament and arms control for both conventional and non-conventional weapons. The commission also has carried out large-scale awareness-raising and information dissemination activities on the negative impacts of the illicit possession of small arms and light weapons in order to build the capacities of law-enforcement agencies in the areas of community policing, physical security and inventory management. Given the threat posed by small arms and light weapons and antipersonnel mines, the commission has also carried out several projects involving demining, decontamination and the collection of illicit weapons in the field. Those efforts have allowed us to recover a number of weapons and munitions, including anti-tank mines and antipersonnel mines.

By way of conclusion, the Niger reiterates its firm support for all multilateral initiatives for disarmament and hopes that the work done during this session will move us significantly closer to disarmament and non-proliferation of conventional weapons.

The Chair: As noted earlier, the awards ceremony for the 2022 United Nations Disarmament Fellowship Certificate is scheduled to begin in a few minutes in this conference room. As is customary, the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Mrs. Izumi Nakamitsu, will address the graduating fellows. For

that purpose, and in accordance with established practice, I shall suspend the meeting at this point. I kindly ask all delegations to remain in their seats for the ceremony in order to congratulate and encourage our junior colleagues.

The meeting was suspended at 12.30 p.m. and resumed at 12.46 p.m.

Mr. Almarar (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): The delegation of the United Arab Emirates aligns itself with the statements made on behalf of the Group of Arab States and the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/77/PV.19).

The world continues to witness conflicts and regional threats that undermine the system of disarmament and international security. The Middle East is one of the most prominent regions where intensive efforts are needed to achieve the objectives of disarmament and stable security. That is why my country attaches utmost importance to all the efforts made to render the Middle East a zone free from nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction (WMDs).

In order to promote those efforts, my country supports the initiative of the United Nations to convene the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction. We participated in its first and second sessions and look forward to participating in its third session, to be convened in November under the chairmanship of the Lebanese Republic. My country takes this opportunity to urge all parties invited to participate in the Conference to engage constructively in negotiations aimed at concluding a binding treaty to ensure regional and international peace and stable security.

The United Arab Emirates reiterates its regret at the fact that the tenth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) failed to adopt its outcome document. We stress in that regard the need for all parties to the upcoming Review Conference to achieve concrete results and to take serious steps aimed at the implementation of the plan of action agreed in 2010. In addition, there is a need to undertake a comprehensive review of the three pillars of the Treaty. My country also urges all States parties to participate in a constructive dialogue aimed at achieving the objectives of the Treaty.

Concerning the latest developments on the Korean peninsula, the United Arab Emirates condemns the launching of ballistic missiles, particularly over Japanese territory. We reiterate our call on all parties to return to the NPT and to sign the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty while complying with the relevant international resolutions in order to achieve security and stability on the Korean peninsula.

The United Arab Emirates stresses its commitment to the NPT. It also emphasizes the right of States to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. My country has been a model of the peaceful use of nuclear energy in the region. Since joining the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in 1976, my country has continued to cooperate with the Agency and to participate actively in its activities pursuant to our national development priorities in various sectors as well as our 2071 centennial vision, which aims to raise the level of our country to that of the best ones.

In conclusion, my country calls on all Member States to comply with the criteria of the IAEA and to take the additional measures necessary to strengthen confidence, cooperation and transparency in their nuclear activities in a manner that would reflect positively on their conduct in the region.

Mr. Dvali (Georgia): Ensuring regional peace and security is essential to achieving peace at the global level. Today we see intensified regional conflicts all over the world that challenge global peace. However, the greatest challenge today is Russia's unprovoked and unjustified full-scale military aggression against Ukraine, which clearly demonstrates how regional conflict can have international implications and cause a serious global crisis.

In the context of that challenge, we would like to bring to the attention of the First Committee the situation in the Black Sea region, which for many years has been particularly exposed to militarization, in flagrant violation of all international rules and standards. Despite the significant regional and international efforts made in past years to enhance security in the Black Sea region, Russia's aggression in Ukraine has subverted all those endeavours and exposed the region to unprecedented risks, undermining European and global security.

The Black Sea represents a historical transit route between Europe and Asia, but today it faces the serious threat of being blocked for essential import-export

activities, which endangers not only the wider Black Sea region but also the international security environment as a whole. We all are aware of how Russia's blockade in the Black Sea has put the world on the verge of a global food security crisis.

It is evident that new security and political realities are emerging in the Black Sea region. In that context, I would like to draw the Committee's attention to Russia's continued illegal actions with regard to Georgia. Today Russia continues to exercise effective control over 20 per cent of Georgia's territory through its illegal military presence in Georgia's occupied regions, in violation of international law and the Charter of the United Nations.

The recent judgment of the European Court of Human Rights clearly establishes Russia's legal responsibility for the violation of international law and human rights during the August 2008 war and during the period of the continued occupation of regions of Georgia. The Court's judgment is yet another unequivocal attestation to the illegal occupation of the internationally recognized territories of Georgia by the Russian Federation.

In parallel, Russia is intensifying the annexation process of both illegally occupied regions, enhancing the so-called borderization process and continuing to illegally detain and kidnap Georgian citizens, as well as enacting the closure of the occupation line and restrictions on the freedom of movement. All those activities represent a blatant violation of the fundamental principles of international law and contravene Russia's international obligations under the European Union-mediated ceasefire agreement of 12 August 2008. Meanwhile, no international presence is allowed in the occupied territories.

Russia's war against Ukraine, the excessive militarization of the Black Sea region and the continued illegal occupation of the territories of sovereign countries are issues that cannot be confined within regional boundaries but have wider implications for global security. We believe, therefore, that this is the major challenge facing the international community — a challenge that needs to be addressed with a resolute and consistent strategic response and through enhanced international engagement.

Mr. Alhashim (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I should like to extend to you, Mr. Chair, and to the members of the Bureau our sincere thanks for

your effective management of the work of the First Committee during this session.

My delegation associates itself with the statement made by the delegation of friendly Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/77/PV.19) as well as the statement made by the delegation of the brotherly Republic of Iraq on behalf of the Group of Arab States.

The State of Kuwait reiterates its firm position on issues of non-proliferation and disarmament in all their forms. We welcome any progress made in that field with a view to eliminating the danger of the outbreak of war. Military expenditures last year exceeded \$2 trillion. There is therefore a need to divert human, economic and intellectual resources to serve peaceful purposes.

In that context, the State of Kuwait commends the efforts made in the area of regional disarmament, foremost among which are the treaties for the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones in Latin America and the Caribbean, the South Pacific, South-East Asia, Africa and Central Asia. In that regard, the State of Kuwait calls for the same to be achieved in particular in the Middle East, in implementation of the resolution adopted by the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) in 1995. That resolution constitutes an integral part of the agreement of the indefinite extension of the Treaty.

The Secretary-General's agenda for disarmament has described such zones as important tools that are an example of the complementarity between global and regional efforts and add great value to collective efforts to achieve a world that is more peaceful and

more stable. My country looks forward to the third session of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction, to be held in November under the chairmanship of the brotherly Lebanese Republic.

We would note the success of the second session, held under the chairmanship of the State of Kuwait, in adopting the rules of procedure of the Conference and the establishment of an informal working committee to continue consultations among official sessions of the Conference.

My country also emphasizes the need for Israel to join the NPT and place its nuclear facilities under the supervision of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Concerning international efforts, the state of Kuwait welcomes the efforts of the United Nations regional centres for peace and disarmament in Asia, Africa and Latin America and their role in promoting regional security and combating the illicit trade in arms. My country reiterates its support for the relevant United Nations resolutions on regional disarmament.

In conclusion, the State of Kuwait is firm in its position that calls for the strengthening of treaties in the field of disarmament. My country therefore supports multilateral efforts aimed at ensuring the universality of the disarmament and non-proliferation treaties.

The Chair: I thank the representative of Kuwait for the kind words he addressed to me.

We have exhausted the time available for this meeting.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.