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First Committee

4th meeting

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Official Records

Chair: Mr. Paulauskas (Lithuania)

The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Agenda items 90 to 106 (continued)

General debate on all disarmament and international security agenda items

The Chair: Before I open the floor for statements, I would like to remind all delegations that the list of speakers for this phase of our work is closed, in accordance with our programme of work and timetable. I hope that all delegations intending to take the floor during the general debate were able to inscribe themselves on the list before the deadline. The list of speakers for the thematic discussion and for the plenary meeting on the working methods of the Committee and programme planning is now open.

I would like to further remind delegations that I count on their cooperation in respecting the time limit for statements and speaking at a reasonable speed in order to allow for adequate interpretation. Longer statements can be posted on the eStatements portal.

Mr. Sánchez Kiesslich (Mexico): I have the honour to take the floor on behalf of the members of the New Agenda Coalition (NAC) — Brazil, Egypt, Ireland, New Zealand, South Africa and my own country, Mexico.

At the outset, the NAC congratulates you, Mr. Chair, on your assumption of the chairship of the First Committee this year, and would like to assure you of the NAC's full cooperation.

This year the NAC is marking the 25 years that have passed since the adoption of the Dublin joint

ministerial declaration entitled "Towards a nuclear-weapon-free world: the need for a new agenda", which established our initiative. Since 1998, the NAC has never wavered in its advocacy of nuclear disarmament negotiations. In doing so, we have emphasized the moral and ethical underpinnings of the fulfilment of disarmament obligations and commitments that all States parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), in particular the nuclear-weapon States, must abide by.

We recognize that certain accomplishments in nuclear disarmament have been achieved since our founding. But the reality is that the achievement of a world free of nuclear weapons, let alone its maintenance, is still pending, and so must remain an urgent priority for the international community. We therefore note with deep concern the profound global challenges to peace and security that we are facing today. We are alarmed that the recent international tensions, including within the context of the conflict in Ukraine, have taken on a growing nuclear dimension, particularly where threats of the use of nuclear weapons and increasingly strident nuclear rhetoric are concerned and which we unequivocally condemn. We want to underline the dangers that brings, occurring as it does against a backdrop of the increased prominence that nuclear-weapon States and States under extended nuclear security guarantees are giving to maintaining and even increasing the role of nuclear weapons in security doctrines, in addition to the placement of nuclear weapons on the territory of non-nuclear-weapon States.

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We have noted for some time now the nuclear-weapon States' plans to expand, modernize and qualitatively improve their nuclear arsenals. Alongside those plans, there are now disturbing signs that nuclear-weapon stockpiles are increasing. Other negative developments include the weakening of the disarmament and non-proliferation architecture, including the erosion or demise of existing treaties on nuclear arms control and a continuing disregard of the need to strengthen negative security assurances. In that context, we are dismayed by the successive failures of the two most recent Review Conferences of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. The States parties to the Treaty were unable to reach a consensus agreement on actions that would strengthen the NPT regime. The inability of the Working Group on Strengthening the Review Process of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons to agree on substantive outcomes and recommendations was of further concern, and did not reflect the groundswell of support evident for that work.

The NAC reiterates that the existing nuclear-disarmament-related obligations and commitments remain valid, including the unequivocal undertaking of the nuclear-weapon States to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals, leading to nuclear disarmament. Accordingly, the NAC will continue to advocate for the implementation of concrete, transparent, mutually reinforcing, verifiable and irreversible nuclear-disarmament measures as part of the fulfilment of NPT obligations and commitments.

We continue to be deeply concerned about the catastrophic humanitarian consequences that would result from any use of nuclear weapons. Ultimately, humanitarian imperatives underpin nuclear disarmament and the urgency of achieving it, especially when new evidence is taken into account, such as the highly disproportionate and gendered impact on women and girls of exposure to ionizing radiation, among other effects. In 1995, the basis for the indefinite extension of the NPT was permanence with accountability, and it remains so to this day. It will be critical to ensure that within the current review cycle of the Treaty we collectively advance measures on the agreements reached at the 1995, 2000 and 2010 NPT Review Conferences, in particular the 13 steps to nuclear disarmament.

We urge the nuclear-weapon States to implement all their nuclear disarmament obligations and commitments

in a manner that strengthens accountability and enables all States parties to regularly monitor progress, thereby enhancing transparency and increasing mutual confidence, in addition to facilitating the evidence-based evaluation of progress towards the full implementation of article VI of the NPT and nuclear-disarmament commitments. Measures to that end should include improved reporting by the nuclear-weapon States, ideally through a standard format with concrete and detailed information concerning the implementation of their obligations and commitments. The reporting should also include details on their plans related to the modernization of nuclear weapons; their nuclear capabilities, including quantity, type and status of nuclear warheads, as well as delivery vehicles; doctrinal issues; risk reduction measures; de-alerting measures; quantities of fissile material and the number and type of weapons and delivery systems they disarm. The format should also contain other tools, such as a set of benchmarks, timelines and other similar criteria, in order to ensure and facilitate the objective evaluation of progress.

One highlight is the consolidation of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) regime, with positive steps being taken to universalize the TPNW and implement its Action Plan, which was adopted last year in Vienna. We commend those States that recognize the TPNW for what it is — an effective nuclear disarmament measure that is fully consistent with and complementary to the NPT. We further encourage all States to participate in the second Meeting of States Parties to the TPNW, whether as States parties or observers.

We are also encouraged by the Secretary-General's successful organization in 2019, 2021 and 2022, in accordance with General Assembly decision 73/546 of 22 December 2018, of the sessions of a conference aimed at formulating a treaty establishing a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at by the States of the region. The NAC encourages all the parties concerned and mentioned in the decision to actively engage in the 2023 and subsequent sessions of the Conference.

The NPT is the cornerstone of the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime. But there is a deficit growing in terms of nuclear-weapon States' implementation of their article VI obligations and nuclear disarmament-related commitments. To preserve the Treaty's credibility and strength, the nuclear-weapon

States must implement their respective obligations and commitments in full and without delay in order to redress the imbalance in implementation with regard to non-nuclear weapon States. Any presumption of indefinite possession of nuclear weapons runs counter to the object and purpose of the Treaty, and any threat of the use of nuclear weapons is contrary to the Charter of the United Nations and multiple resolutions adopted each year by the General Assembly.

Mr. Bencini (Italy): I would like to congratulate you on your election, Mr. Chair. You can count on my delegation's full cooperation.

Italy aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union (see A/C.1/78/PV.2), and I would like to add some remarks in my national capacity.

Since Russia began its illegal, unprovoked and unjustified war of aggression against Ukraine, the global security environment has deteriorated even further. That has a direct impact on our work in multilateral forums, including on non-proliferation, disarmament and arms export-control issues. However, far from deterring us, the challenges that this war is posing to the rules-based international order motivate us even more strongly to reaffirm our unswerving commitment to the Charter of the United Nations and international law. Italy remains firmly committed to strengthening the multilateral disarmament machinery and all the relevant treaties and conventions with the aim of achieving their universalization. We support the convening, at the appropriate time and with modalities to be defined, of a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament.

The essential value of the multilateral system is also the message underlying the Secretary-General's New Agenda for Peace, and we welcome that document's emphasis on disarmament as an integral component of the United Nations peace and security pillar. One of the key issues that it outlines is the military use of emerging technologies, particularly artificial intelligence. That is likely to become a top priority over the next few years as we struggle to keep pace with a fast-developing technology. We have welcomed the work of the Group of Governmental Experts on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems and believe that a two-tier, ban-or-regulate approach is the best way forward.

Italy shares the goal of a peaceful and secure world completely free of nuclear weapons, in line with article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of

Nuclear Weapons (NPT). At the same time, we have to recognize that in spite of nuclear non-proliferation efforts, including punitive measures, the global threat posed by the spread of nuclear weapons remains very real. Italy believes that effective, verifiable and irreversible nuclear disarmament can be achieved through a progressive approach based on concrete measures. Trust and cooperation among nuclear-weapon States are essential in that respect and must be urgently restored. The Russian Federation must irrevocably cease its continuing irresponsible nuclear rhetoric and threats — which we strongly condemn — return to the full implementation of the New START Treaty and revoke its decision to deploy nuclear weapons in Belarus. We consider that decision highly irresponsible, including in the context of its war of aggression in Ukraine.

As a staunch supporter of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), Italy was pleased to see eight more States acceding to the Treaty during our mandate as article XIV co-Coordinator. Italy urges all States that have not yet done so, in particular the remaining eight annex 2 States, to sign and ratify the CTBT without further delay. In the meantime, we urge all States to respect the moratorium on nuclear tests. It must be clear to all that breaking the moratorium would cause irreparable harm to the global security architecture.

This year marks the thirtieth anniversary of the adoption of the first United Nations resolution on a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices (resolution 48/75 L). It is high time we broke that deadlock. Differing views on existing stocks should not prevent an immediate start of negotiations within the Conference on Disarmament. Pending the conclusion of negotiations, we call on all the relevant States to abide by a moratorium.

Italy has consistently stated that a restored Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action is a key priority for the international community. We urge Iran to return without delay to diplomacy and to the full implementation of all its obligations under the Plan of Action. We are also seriously concerned about a possible resumption of nuclear testing by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. We urge the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to refrain from further provocations, take concrete steps towards a complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization, return to the NPT, fully comply

with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards and sign and ratify the CTBT. I would like to take this opportunity to commend the crucial role that the IAEA is playing in these increasingly difficult times on a variety of issues, starting with the illegal Russian occupation of the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant. Italy will continue to support the Agency's entire range of activities.

Nearly a year ago, I had the privilege and honour to preside over the ninth Review Conference of the Biological Weapons Convention. Despite the tense international context, the Conference agreed by consensus on a final document. We established a working group to strengthen the implementation of the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) and its institutionalization. The success of the ninth BWC Review Conference proves that with commitment and dialogue on all sides we can still achieve good results. We have been reassured by the way that the Working Group on the Strengthening of the Biological Weapons Convention has implemented its mandate so far and by the constructive engagement of many delegations, and we look forward to its next meeting.

Italy remains strongly committed to supporting the Chemical Weapons Convention and the work of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. We strongly condemn any use of chemical weapons anywhere, at any time, by anyone, under any circumstances. We regret that Russia and Syria blocked adoption of a joint outcome document at the conclusion of the fifth Review Conference of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention in May in The Hague, citing their objection to any mention of Syria's well-documented use of chemical weapons.

We believe that there is an urgent need to improve space security in an increasingly congested, contested and competitive outer space environment. We took part with great interest in the meetings of the Open-ended Working Group on Reducing Space Threats through Norms, Rules and Principles for Responsible Behaviours. Although the Open-ended Working Group did not reach consensus on a report, we consider that the work done over two years revealed significant cross-regional convergence around that approach, and we strongly support the renewal of the Working Group's mandate.

Italy is extremely concerned about the increasing indiscriminate humanitarian and socioeconomic

effects of anti-personnel landmines, cluster munitions and other explosive remnants of war, as well as improvised explosive devices, especially on civilians and in populated areas. Italy believes that international cooperation and victim assistance are key components of a comprehensive approach. We strongly and actively support the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and its annexed Protocols. We attach great importance to their universalization, as well as to full compliance with their provisions and the development of any possible synergies among them. A year ago, we strongly supported the Political Declaration on Strengthening the Protection of Civilians from the Humanitarian Consequences Arising from the Use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas. Considering the issue of the protection of civilians against a backdrop of the data on armed violence, we believe it is vital to counter illicit arm transfers, and for that reason we call for the universalization of the Arms Trade Treaty and the full implementation of all its provisions.

We support all efforts towards a global, open, free, stable and secure cyberspace in which international law, including on fundamental freedoms and human rights, fully applies. In that vein, Italy supports the proposal to establish a programme of action on advancing responsible behaviour in cyberspace.

Across all those issues, Italy highly values greater interaction with civil society and mainstreaming a gender perspective as a key contribution to our work.

Ms. Nilsson (Sweden): Sweden associates itself with the statement made on behalf the European Union and the statement delivered by the representative of Denmark on behalf of the Nordic countries (see A/C.1/78/PV.2), and I would like to add the following remarks in my national capacity.

Let me first congratulate you on your election to lead the First Committee, Mr. Chair, and assure you of my delegation's full support.

Today's global challenges, whether they are the deteriorating security environment, threats of terrorism and violent extremism, global food insecurity, climate change or the lack of respect for human rights and democratic principles, require a collective response from the international community. To be effective and credible, that response must be firmly rooted in respect for multilateralism, international law and the Charter of the United Nations. The United Nations must remain at the core of our joint efforts if we are to succeed.

Russia has continued its illegal, unjustified and unprovoked war of aggression against Ukraine. Sweden condemns Russia's brutal invasion in the strongest terms and reaffirms its unwavering support for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, within its internationally recognized borders. Russia's actions, including its threats of using nuclear weapons, are flagrant violations of international law and the Charter. We are horrified by the systematic targeting of civilians and civilian objects, in complete disregard for international humanitarian law. We urge Russia to immediately cease all military activity and withdraw its troops from the entire territory of Ukraine.

The international arms-control, disarmament and non-proliferation architecture continues to be under severe pressure. Mistrust among States remains, and international rhetoric has hardened. Withdrawals from international arms-control agreements, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the expansion of nuclear arsenals, combined with a lack of transparency, raise serious concerns. But despite the current state of affairs, Sweden believes that meaningful progress can and must still be made.

Sweden's aim has consistently been to defend, promote, safeguard and strengthen the international architecture. The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) remains the cornerstone of the global disarmament and non-proliferation regime and Sweden will continue to promote the full implementation of all obligations within the NPT's three pillars, including article VI. We need concrete progress more than ever if we are to reach the ultimate goal of achieving a world free of nuclear weapons. It is in that light that Sweden remains deeply disappointed by the outcomes of last year's Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the first session of the Preparatory Committee. Nevertheless, the constructive and meaningful discussions held during the Working Group on Further Strengthening the NPT Review Conference are encouraging and give rise to hope. We need initiatives that can help create conditions paving the way for greater progress. That is what the Stockholm Initiative for Nuclear Disarmament is aimed at — achieving concrete disarmament progress within the framework of the NPT.

The entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and the conclusion of negotiations for a fissile material cut-off treaty remain

tasks for the international community to deliver on. Sweden urges all remaining annex 2 States to ratify the CTBT. Until it enters into force, the existing moratoriums on nuclear test explosions must be maintained. In addition, and until a cut-off treaty is in force, we call on all States concerned, including China, to declare and uphold an immediate moratorium on the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other explosive devices.

The world is facing several proliferation challenges today. The situation in Iran regarding its safeguards agreement, its lack of cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and its continuing contravention of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action is particularly worrisome, as is the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's development of its nuclear-weapon and ballistic-missile programmes, in contravention of numerous Security Council resolutions. Sweden underlines the central role of the IAEA in that regard. The comprehensive safeguards agreements, together with Protocols, according to the 1997 Model Additional Protocol, constitute the current safeguards verification standard and should be universally applied.

The international norm against the use of chemical and biological weapons is essential to our collective security. Any such use is a violation of international law and perpetrators must be held accountable. Nonetheless, we continue to face serious challenges to this norm. Syria has still not revealed the full extent of its chemical-weapons programme or fully complied with the Chemical Weapons Convention. The Russian authorities have so far failed to respond to the international community's demand that they disclose the circumstances surrounding the attempt to assassinate Alexei Navalny in 2020.

The Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention is a key achievement for international disarmament, peace and security and must be adhered to. Sweden continues to support several States, including Ukraine, as well as other stakeholders, in clearing mines and advocating for mine action. Illicit flows and the destabilizing accumulation and misuse of arms and ammunition, in particular small arms and light weapons, also deserve our continued attention. No other type of weapon causes more deaths or more suffering, while perpetuating gender-based violence. The universalization and full implementation of key instruments such as the Arms Trade Treaty are therefore crucial. The goal is for all countries to have effective systems of control.

Responsible export controls are another way to effectively reduce the availability of small arms and light weapons.

The rapid technological development within the civilian and military domains has provided us with both opportunities and challenges. Sweden believes it is essential for the international community to approach those developments in a responsible way in order to ensure compliance with international law while seeing that human responsibility, accountability and control are maintained.

Sweden regards outer space as a global commons, to be used for the benefit of all, and underlines the applicability of international law, including the United Nations Charter, to all activities in outer space. Sweden is strongly committed to safeguarding the long-term use of the space environment for peaceful purposes and preventing an arms race in outer space. We support the work being done on reducing space threats through responsible behaviour and the establishment of a new open-ended working group to make recommendations on the development of norms, rules and principles for responsible behaviour.

The work of the First Committee must be carried out in a transparent, accountable and inclusive manner. Ensuring gender equality and diversity is therefore crucial. The full, equal and meaningful participation of women and men in decision-making processes is key. So too is engaging with the younger generation and enabling the participation of all relevant stakeholders, including civil society, industry and academia, as they all play an indispensable role in helping States achieve progress.

Mr. Cherif (Tunisia) (*spoke in French*): I am pleased to congratulate you, Mr. Chair, on being elected to lead the General Assembly's Disarmament and International Security Committee at this session. We assure you of our full cooperation and support for the success of the Committee's work. I also congratulate the other members of the Bureau.

My delegation aligns itself with the statements made by the representatives of Indonesia, on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, Jordan, on behalf of the Group of Arab States (see A/C.1/78/PV.2), and Nigeria, on behalf of the Group of African States (see A/C.1/78/PV.3).

The issues of disarmament and international security are of particular importance today, given the current challenging international environment. The statements by global leaders at the high-level segment of the seventy-eighth session of the General Assembly reflected a sense of unease with regard to the disarmament situation in the world and focused on the need to revise ideas, concepts and measures. It should be recalled that in his statement at the high-level meeting to commemorate the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons, Secretary-General Guterres expressed alarm that the number of nuclear weapons in the world could increase for the first time in decades. In that regard, we are witnessing an increase in military expenditure, leading to growing stockpiles of weapons of mass destruction and nuclear weapons, as well as a dangerous turn to military doctrines that advocate the use of nuclear weapons.

Tunisia reiterates its principled positions on the issue of disarmament and international security. We reaffirm that nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction undermine peace, security and stability in the world. It is therefore crucial to rid humankind of such weapons so as to focus all human and financial potential on development.

Tunisia also expresses its support for the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) as a cornerstone of the international disarmament architecture and eagerly awaits the universalization of the Treaty. In that regard, we encourage all States that have not yet adhered to the NPT to do so in order to rid humankind of the nuclear threat once and for all. Tunisia is opposed to the rise in dangerous nuclear rhetoric, the increased role of nuclear weapons in military doctrines, the growing investment in such weapons and the modernization of nuclear arsenals. In that spirit, Tunisia considers that non-proliferation remains an absolute priority in terms of disarmament and regrets the lack of progress in that area. While recalling its attachment to the Charter of the United Nations, it considers it essential to make progress towards the goal of the total elimination of nuclear weapons. Tunisia regrets the lack of consensus on that issue, in particular at the ninth and tenth Review Conferences of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and expresses the hope that the Summit for the Future will succeed in renewing the impetus and determination to make progress towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

We also reaffirm our commitment to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and call on States to sign and ratify it so that it can enter into force. In the meantime, we call on all States to declare or maintain their existing national moratoriums on nuclear-weapon-test explosions and to refrain from any action that would undermine the objective and purpose of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

We remain convinced that the convening of the high-level United Nations international conference on nuclear disarmament, as called for in relevant General Assembly resolutions, would provide a propitious opportunity take stock of the situation, evaluate the progress achieved and trace the path to be followed in the years ahead.

Tunisia recalls that all States have the right to develop nuclear energy for peaceful purposes and to cooperate with other States to that end. Tunisia advocates the promotion of trust among the actors of the international community. Trust remains the foundation of any commitment and helps to put an end to the mutual misunderstandings and scepticism that often undermines disarmament efforts. We remain convinced that transparency and good-faith commitment foster a positive dynamic that can advance disarmament efforts. In that spirit, we welcome all efforts to reduce stockpiles of weapons and call for the renewal of commitments agreed in that context.

Tunisia would like to stress the important contribution of nuclear-weapon-free zones to disarmament and non-proliferation efforts. We believe that the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zones will significantly strengthen multilateral disarmament and non-proliferation regimes at subregional, regional and international levels and contribute to strengthening peace and security in the world.

Tunisia welcomes the convening of the fourth Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction. The third Conference made it possible to continue to make progress towards the goal of making the Middle East a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, in accordance with General Assembly decision 73/546. Achieving that goal will certainly help to reduce the risk of conflict in the region and will restore trust among States and ease tensions. However, Tunisia considers that Israel's persistent refusal to participate in negotiations on the

creation of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons a serious threat to regional and international peace and security, as well as a violation of the relevant United Nations decisions and resolutions.

I would also like to take this opportunity to reaffirm Tunisia's commitment to the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention and the Chemical Weapons Convention and reiterate our call for the universalization of those Conventions. In that spirit, we reiterate our position of principle rejecting any use of chemical and bacteriological weapons. We remain deeply concerned by the security, humanitarian and socioeconomic consequences of the illicit trade, proliferation and trafficking of conventional weapons, in particular small arms and light weapons, which continue to pose a serious threat to international peace and security.

Tunisia emphasizes the need for full and effective implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and the International Tracing Instrument and stresses the need to step up efforts to promote international cooperation and assistance in that field.

Tunisia supports the adoption of the Arms Trade Treaty for the important contribution it can make to resolving the problem of the illicit trade in conventional arms without prejudice to the legitimate right of States to legally acquire conventional arms and ammunition for their self-defence and security needs.

Outer space is the common heritage of humankind and future generations. That is why Tunisia believes that any action aimed at the appropriation or use of outer space for weapons purposes represents a serious threat to humankind and international security.

We are also concerned about the increasing use of new technologies in warfare. The arrival of new information and communication technologies represents a major upheaval. We support the strengthening of international cooperation for the peaceful use of these new technologies and to mitigate the risks posed by their malicious use. We also stress the importance of open and inclusive discussions on this topic.

The Chair: I express my apologies and thank the representative of Tunisia for its understanding, but we need to observe the time limits.

Ms. Hayovyshyn (Ukraine): We warmly congratulate you, Mr. Chair, on your on election as

Chair of the First Committee and reassure you, Sir, of our delegation's full support.

The delegation of Ukraine aligns itself with the statement of the European Union (see A/C.1/78/PV.2) and would like to make a few remarks in its national capacity.

The achievement of progress in the field of disarmament, with the ultimate goal of the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free world, has been one of Ukraine's top priorities.

Ukraine strongly supports the comprehensive nuclear test ban and calls upon all States whose ratification is needed for its entry into force to do so without further delay.

The other long overdue task on our agenda is the immediate commencement of negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty, which is essential both to constrain nuclear proliferation and to advance the goal of nuclear disarmament.

We firmly believe that the establishment of new nuclear-weapon-free zones, as well as further strengthening of the system of safeguards of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), are becoming more urgent tasks for the non-proliferation regime.

Ukraine recognizes that the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) remains a cornerstone of the nuclear non-proliferation regime and the foundation for the pursuit of nuclear disarmament and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. However, in recent years, global disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control architecture have been dramatically deteriorating.

In 2014, Russia, a nuclear-weapon State, occupied part of Ukraine's territory and started an armed aggression against it, which constitutes a grave violation of international law and a betrayal of security assurances provided in the Budapest Memorandum.

In 2022, Russia continued, with its launching of a full-scale war of aggression against Ukraine. During the past two years, Russia repeatedly threatened to use its nuclear weapons against Ukraine. Moscow has also announced that it has deployed nuclear weapons to the territory of another country, Belarus, as well as its readiness to conduct a nuclear test.

The case of Russia's aggressive war against Ukraine is a very vivid example of the fact that security assurances, provided instead of security guarantees, turned out to be invalid. The security assurances provided by Russia to Ukraine through the 1994 Budapest Memorandum failed to deter Russian aggression, as there were no immediate costs for violating them.

At the global level, we must all invent a more compelling deal than security assurances. After the violation of the global security system by the Russian Federation, we are paying a far dearer price for peace, stability and security in the world.

Ukraine strongly condemns the series of ballistic and intercontinental ballistic missile launches conducted by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea throughout 2022 and 2023, in blatant violation of relevant Security Council resolutions. In that regard, we call on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to refrain from conducting any ballistic missile tests, fully implement and respect Security Council resolutions related to its weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missile programmes, immediately return to compliance with the NPT and the IAEA comprehensive safeguards agreement, including by signing and ratifying the Additional Protocol thereto, as well as the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty itself.

The issue of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action remains of deep concern for the international community and still depends on Iran's compliance with its obligations under the Plan of Action.

As of today, at the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant, the Russian army continues to illegally prevent Ukrainian nuclear workers from fulfilling their obligations in the field of nuclear and radiation safety in accordance with international conventions, as well as the current norms and standards of the IAEA.

Russia has already mined the plant. Constant missile attacks by the Russian armed forces in the immediate vicinity of the Ukrainian nuclear power plants can lead to the hitting of the reactor components. Such actions by the Russian Federation continue to pose serious threats to nuclear safety and security in Ukraine and far beyond its borders. Russia must immediately comply with the relevant resolutions of the IAEA Board of Governors and the most recent resolution of the Agency's General Conference, cease all its actions against peaceful

nuclear facilities in Ukraine and return full control over all nuclear installations seized to Ukraine.

Ukraine reiterates its full support for the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and the other international instruments to which Ukraine is party. Since the beginning of its full-scale war of aggression against Ukraine, Russia has used various types of conventional weapons on the territory of our country that are prohibited by international conventions and arms-control treaties. Moscow's numerous war crimes have included launching horrific missile attacks on civilian targets in Ukraine. At the moment it is actively using Iranian unmanned aerial vehicles that Tehran has transferred to Moscow in violation of Security Council resolution 2231 (2015). The Iranian drones are used primarily as a method of warfare targeting densely populated areas and critical infrastructure in Ukraine.

As of today, almost one third of the territory of Ukraine has been contaminated with mines and explosive remnants of war. Our experts have been detecting thousands of Russian explosives that pose a threat to civilians, including children, on a daily basis. It is estimated that it may take more than 30 years to completely clear Ukraine of explosives. Humanitarian demining, including the creation of a production base in Ukraine for clearing Ukrainian territory of Russian mines and providing assistance and rehabilitation for victims, is therefore one of the most critical and urgent issues confronting Ukraine. We are grateful to all our partners and the international and non-governmental organizations that have already provided support in clearing our territory. In that regard, the upcoming international donor conference to be held in Zagreb on 11 and 12 October on humanitarian demining in Ukraine, organized by the Governments of Ukraine and Croatia, will contribute significantly to the goal of making Ukraine mine-free as soon as possible.

Mr. Al-Dobhany (Yemen) (*spoke in Arabic*): My country's delegation would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as Chair of the First Committee of the General Assembly at its seventy-eighth session. We underscore our readiness to cooperate with you to ensure the success of the session, which is taking place in complex international geopolitical circumstances and an atmosphere of sharp polarization.

My delegation aligns itself with the statements made by the representatives of Jordan, on behalf of the Group of Arab States, and Indonesia, on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, respectively (see A/C.1/78/PV.2).

Yemen reaffirms its commitment to the purposes and principles of disarmament, international security and nuclear non-proliferation, because nuclear weapons are a threat to regional and international peace and security. My country therefore supports all initiatives aimed at limiting the spread of nuclear weapons and establishing zones free of weapons of mass destruction, in particular in the Middle East. Our region continues to face instability and insecurity, owing to an imbalance of power among its parties and the presence of nuclear activities that are not subject to the nuclear non-proliferation regime.

Despite the fact that all Arab States have acceded to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and are always ready to take measures aimed at establishing a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East, Israel continues to refuse to join the NPT or to subject its nuclear facilities to the safeguards agreements of the International Atomic Energy Agency. It has also rejected all international initiatives aimed at universalizing the NPT and nuclear disarmament in the Middle East, all of which perpetuates the region's instability and potential for an arms race.

My country welcomed the success of the three sessions of the United Nations Conference to Establish a Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction in the Middle East, held in 2019, 2021 and 2022, and supports the decisions adopted at the sessions pursuant to resolution 73/546. We look forward to seeing all the States concerned participate actively in the fourth session of the Conference, to be held in November under the chairmanship of Libya, with the aim of reaching a binding treaty that promotes peace, security and stability in the region and the world.

It has been more than 50 years since the NPT entered into force, and 27 years since it was extended indefinitely, which underscores the importance of ensuring the continuity of the Treaty and the implementation of the obligations it imposes. In that regard, we deeply regret the failure of the tenth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons to agree on a final document for the second time in a row, after a

similar failure in 2015. We emphasize the importance of overcoming our differences and promoting multilateralism with the goal of achieving a world free of nuclear weapons for the sake of preserving future generations. We look forward to seeing all the participants contribute to the success of the eleventh Review Conference and reaching a comprehensive and balanced outcome document that includes clear measures to promote the universality and effectiveness of the Treaty through the implementation of agreed commitments, especially with regard to the complete elimination of nuclear weapons and the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East.

The First Committee is meeting as my country continues to suffer from the war that resulted from the coup launched by the terrorist Houthi militias, with the support of Iran, against the constitutionally legitimate Government. Iran's support includes the provision of ballistic missiles, drones, explosives, landmines and sea mines, and it is endangering the present and future of Yemen and its neighbours as well as security and stability in the region and the world. The disastrous situation caused by the mines and explosive devices that the terrorist Houthi militias have planted poses an existential threat to thousands of Yemenis, including women and children, as well as to international shipping lines in the Bab Al-Mandab Strait and the Red Sea.

Yemen joined the Ottawa Mine Ban Treaty in 1997, and our national army has made major efforts to demine our country with the help of the Saudi Masam Project for landmine clearance in Yemen. However, the reduced international support has presented a significant challenge. We call on the international community to once again put meaningful pressure on the Houthi militias to immediately cease laying mines and using arms against the Yemeni people. The Iranian regime must also stop supplying the Houthi militias with weapons and missiles and abide by international decisions by ending its export of those weapons and its interference in my country's internal affairs. We also call on the international community and specialized agencies to step up their support for the Yemeni Government in its efforts to clear the country of mines, conduct rehabilitation and raise awareness about the threat of mines and how to address them. And we reaffirm the need to implement the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, given the fact that armed militias and terrorist

groups continue to obtain such weapons, thereby prolonging the war and diminishing the prospects for peace, security and stability in Yemen and the region.

With regard to cybersecurity, we stress the importance of international support in enhancing communications and information security in order to protect countries and improve their ability to withstand sabotage attacks and help to support least-developed countries in facing the challenges that can result from the misuse of information and communications technology.

In conclusion, we look forward to the success of this session and reiterate our continued willingness to cooperate in order to achieve our common goals and objectives for a world of peace and security.

Mr. Muhamad (Malaysia): At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Sir, and the members of the Bureau, on your election and assure you of my delegation's full support.

Malaysia aligns itself with the statements delivered by the representatives of Indonesia, on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, and the Philippines, on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, respectively (see A/C.1/78/PV.2).

In times of heightened geopolitical tension, the First Committee retains a key role as a universal body for deliberations on disarmament and international security issues. Considering the rise in threats to the multilateral system, it is vital that Member States demonstrate renewed political will to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, in the words of the Charter of the United Nations. Even as we face multifaceted socioeconomic challenges threatening humankind and our planet, a select group of States continues to invest in the constant upgrading of their nuclear arsenals. Their qualitative improvement of their nuclear weapons and quantitative increases in them are matters of great concern, while the persistence and expansion of nuclear-sharing arrangements, premised on a false logic of deterrence, is yet another deeply disconcerting trend. Malaysia also unequivocally condemns any and every nuclear threat, whether explicit or implicit, irrespective of the circumstances.

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) remains the cornerstone of the global nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime. However, the NPT's credibility and integrity are under great strain. The consecutive failures of the ninth

and tenth Review Conferences of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons to adopt a substantive outcome have brought the States parties into uncharted territory. The full and effective implementation of NPT obligations and commitments is imperative in enabling us to advance towards a nuclear-weapon-free world and to maximize the benefits of the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and technology. The first session of the Preparatory Committee for the eleventh NPT Review Conference, recently held in Vienna, has reminded us of the prevailing deficit in trust among the States parties and of the need to redouble our efforts to find common ground. The preservation of universal principles of multilateral engagement and the established framework of the NPT review process is essential if we are to maintain the Treaty's relevance and credibility. In terms of arms control, Malaysia calls on the parties to the New START Treaty to ensure its continued implementation and to maintain limits on the deployment of strategic nuclear warheads and delivery systems, pending their total elimination.

As long as nuclear weapons exist, the spectre of nuclear annihilation will loom over humankind. The fate of the world cannot be allowed to depend on the precarious hope that States armed with such abhorrent weapons of mass destruction will make judicious decisions. My delegation firmly believes in the value of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), a landmark instrument that reflects an understanding of the urgency of realizing a nuclear-weapon-free world. We look forward to the convening of the second Meeting of States Parties to the TPNW in New York at the end of the year. Together with South Africa, Malaysia is honoured to serve as co-Chair of the informal working group on the universalization of the TPNW. In that role, we facilitated the convening in New York on 19 September of a TPNW high-level signing ceremony under the treaty event of the United Nations Office of Legal Affairs. Malaysia welcomed the Bahamas' signing of the TPNW and Sri Lanka's accession to it during the ceremony, and we commend them for their decisive action in consolidating the TPNW. My delegation reaffirms that the TPNW is fully compatible with, and complementary to, the NPT.

Nuclear-weapon-free zones play a critical role in safeguarding nations against the scourge of nuclear weapons through legally binding negative security assurances on the part of nuclear-weapon States. In that regard, Malaysia underscores the need to

continually engage all nuclear-weapon States and intensify all parties' efforts to address outstanding issues in accordance with the objectives and principles of the Southeast Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone (SEANWFZ) Treaty. We also call on the remaining annex 2 States to sign and ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) as soon as possible so as to enable its entry into force and thereby proscribe nuclear testing under international law.

During this year's session, Malaysia will again submit to the First Committee our annual draft resolution entitled "Follow-up to the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the legality of the threat or use of nuclear weapons". We call on all delegations to support the draft resolution in recognition of the enduring salience of the Court's opinion.

Malaysia remains gravely concerned about the developments in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's nuclear and ballistic-missile programmes. It will be crucial for the parties concerned to resume dialogue with a view to achieving the complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization of the Korean peninsula.

Malaysia condemns in the strongest possible terms the use of chemical weapons by anyone, in any circumstances. The use of such weapons is abhorrent and a flagrant violation of international law, in particular the Chemical Weapons Convention. Those responsible for the deployment and use of such weapons must be held accountable. My delegation also supports efforts to universalize the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) and ensure adherence to its provisions. In line with article IV of the BWC, Malaysia is currently in the process of enacting a national biological weapons bill, which will be part of Malaysia's legislative framework vis-à-vis the implementation of the Convention.

Malaysia remains committed to acceding to international treaties governing the use and exploration of outer space. In line with that commitment, Malaysia has endorsed its 2030 national space policy and in January 2022 published legislation on outer space activities. We are also deeply concerned about the illicit transfer, manufacture and circulation of small arms and light weapons and their excessive accumulation and uncontrolled spread in many regions of the world. Malaysia calls firmly for the full, balanced and effective implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in

All Its Aspects. In countering emerging threats in the cyber domain, Malaysia recognizes the value of the Open-ended Working Group on Security of and in the Use of Information and Communications Technologies 2021–2025 and welcomes the consensus adoption of the Group's second annual progress report (see A/78/265), which sets out a solid basis for its work in the year ahead.

Malaysia looks forward to engaging with all Member States as we navigate the challenges at hand and develop multilateral initiatives in the interests of advancing disarmament and international security through the First Committee.

Ms. Hyvärinen (Finland): Mr. Chair, allow me to congratulate you on your election as Chair of the First Committee of the General Assembly, and assure you of the full support of my delegation.

In addition to the statements delivered on behalf of the European Union and by the representative of Denmark on behalf of the Nordic countries (see A/C.1/78/PV.2), I would like to make some remarks in my national capacity.

Today the international arms-control, disarmament and non-proliferation architecture is at a crossroads. Breaches of norms of disarmament and non-proliferation over the past few years have put the system under considerable pressure. Every violation of the existing normative regime is dangerous, as it decreases the predictability of behaviour and trust, which are the building blocks of a functioning rules-based international order and multilateralism. We must all be strongly committed to defending, promoting and further strengthening the global architecture for arms control, disarmament, multilateralism, non-proliferation and export-control regimes.

Finland condemns the unjustified and illegal war of aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine. Russia's invasion of a sovereign country is a violation of international law, including the Charter of the United Nations. Finland firmly supports Ukraine's independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity and righteous self-defence in accordance with Article 51 of the Charter. The Russian Federation must immediately cease its military actions, withdraw its troops from the entire territory of Ukraine and respect Ukraine's territorial integrity and sovereignty within its internationally recognized borders.

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) has served the international community well for more than half a century. The first NPT Preparatory Committee meeting of the current review cycle held in August in Vienna highlighted the States parties' strong commitment to the Treaty and its full implementation. At the same time, it was obvious that States parties are concerned about the slow pace of nuclear disarmament, proliferation crises and the inadequate fulfilment of the right to peaceful uses of nuclear energy. The NPT review process got off to a good start nonetheless. The working papers and statements delivered in the Preparatory Committee gave a clear picture of the various priorities, aspirations and concerns for the review cycle. They are well complemented by the Chair's working paper on further strengthening the NPT review process and his reflections paper. We are confident that it will be possible to have a successful review process leading to a meaningful outcome for the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons in 2026. Finland is fully committed to that end and ready to do its part.

We condemn Russia's long-standing and continued disregard of its arms-control obligations, most recently the New START Treaty, as well as its withdrawal from the Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty. We urge it to immediately return to compliance with the New START and CFE treaties and fulfil all their related obligations.

We are concerned about the fact that China is rapidly expanding and diversifying its nuclear arsenal. We encourage China to be more transparent on its nuclear policy and to engage in efforts to reduce nuclear risks.

In recent years, chemical weapons were used on a large scale in Syria. They have also been used outside conflict zones to poison individuals. The re-emergence of the use of chemical weapons remains a threat to international peace and security.

We condemn the use of chemical weapons in all circumstances, by anyone, anywhere and at any time. The use of chemical weapons constitutes a violation of international law and, in certain circumstances, it amounts to war crimes and crimes against humanity. Our most urgent priority is to uphold the norm against the use of chemical weapons and to ensure that perpetrators of chemical attacks are held to account.

We regret that the fifth Review Conference of the Chemical Weapons Convention, earlier this year, ended without a consensual outcome. Finland is strongly committed to supporting the efforts and actions of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons in order to ensure respect for the universal non-use norms of chemical weapons.

The Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention is a key component of the international arms control regime and a vital pillar of the rules-based international system. We support the strengthening of the Convention and look forward to the recommendations and measures to be proposed by the expert group established by the ninth Review Conference.

We reiterate our strong support to prevent and fight the illicit spread of small arms and light weapons and stress the robust implementation of the Small Arms and Light Weapons Programme of Action. We also welcome the work and the outcome of the Open-ended Working Group on Conventional Ammunition.

Next year will be a landmark year for the United Nations, as the General Assembly will host the Summit of the Future. It is important to achieve an ambitious and action-oriented Pact for the Future that strengthens international peace and security by advancing disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation through multilateral cooperation.

Finally, yet importantly, we need to scale up our efforts towards gender equality and the full inclusion of women into our substantive work. We look forward to working with all delegations to make this session of the First Committee a success.

Mr. Vorontsov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Since last year's session of the First Committee's, there has been little cause for optimism about the international security situation. The accumulated conflict potential, which was not curbed in a timely manner, has already led to an acute crisis in the Euro-Atlantic region and threatens to evolve into a direct confrontation in the Asia-Pacific region. The fact that the States possessing nuclear arsenals are directly involved multiplies strategic risks.

The roots of the worsening contradictions lie, first of all, in extremely selfish ambitions aggressively implemented by the United States-led West, to the detriment of other nations' interests. That shameless course of action is based on Washington's insatiable

craving for unchallenged global dominance and its attempts to undermine the shaping a more just, multipolar world.

The truly sovereign States that firmly oppose the dictates of the West are subjected to demonization and hybrid pressure or outright bullying. The United States and its allies show blatant intolerance for dissent and are trying, in violation of the Charter of the United Nations, to impose rules of behaviour on other States. To consolidate their own hegemony, they persistently strive to replace international law with a so-called "rules-based order" that is comfortable for them. In fact, that is a usurpation of the prerogative to shape a global agenda in all its aspects, including arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation.

Having grossly flouted the principle of equal and indivisible security, the United States-led NATO bloc undertook a malicious expansion into the post-Soviet territory, forcing our country to take the necessary measures to protect its external security borders. At the same time, the West continues to raise the stakes, and we are now dangerously balancing on the brink of a direct armed conflict between nuclear Powers.

The potential escalation as a result of the United States implementing its plans to deploy weapons that were previously prohibited under the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, which was denounced by Washington, is deeply alarming. Further negative developments around the New START Treaty, which was suspended due to the destructive policies carried out by the United State, cannot be excluded either. Washington is clearly capable of other destabilizing steps under the auspices of seeking to inflict a strategic defeat on our country and ensure the so-called "two-way nuclear deterrence" of Russia and China.

Such circumstances add to the rationale behind the argument that ideas about an immediate and complete ban on nuclear weapons or about artificial deadlines for reaching nuclear zero are counter-productive. We are convinced that progress in nuclear disarmament can be achieved only on the basis of step-by-step and consensual measures, accompanied by consistent work to improve the political and military climate, while showing respect for the security interests of all parties.

To that end, it is necessary to drastically reduce the level of conflict potential between major military Powers and ensure a long-overdue overhaul of the

international security architecture. Such work should be carried out in a comprehensive manner, take into account all relevant factors and must include efforts to eliminate the root causes of fundamental differences between nuclear-weapon States in security.

As a result of the extreme politicization of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) agenda, the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) are unable to agree on recommendations based on the results of two review cycles of the Convention. All this has led to the inevitable destruction of the CWC regime and has caused irreparable damage to the work and reputation of the OPCW.

In the context of fulfilling obligations under the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC), attention should be paid to the facts about the implementation by the United States of a military biological programme in Ukraine, with the support of the Pentagon and its affiliated bodies. The justified questions that were officially posed by Russia regarding the military-biological activity that has been conducted in violation of the BTWC must be answered. The situation confirms the need to adopt a legally binding protocol that would apply to all articles of the Convention and provide an effective verification mechanism. We expect that the implementation of that task will be facilitated by the Working Group on the Strengthening of the BTWC, established by the ninth Review Conference of the BTWC, in line with Russia's proposal.

There is an urgent need to strengthen the Secretary-General's Mechanism for Investigation of Alleged Use of Chemical and Biological Weapons. On 14 June, Mr. Sergey Lavrov, Foreign Minister of the Russian Federation, sent a note to the Secretary-General, calling for a review of the current Mechanism principles and procedures, with a view to updating them, which is objectively long overdue. Many countries supported that idea, and many States submitted similar appeals to António Guterres. We hope that he will immediately start the corresponding review, with the help of expert consultants and taking into account the proposals of Member States.

For decades, Russia has been in favour of preserving outer space for the exclusively peaceful activities of States, on an equal footing, for the benefit of all humankind. We expect that the Group of Governmental

Experts on the Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space (PAROS), established by resolution 77/250, will achieve substantive results and thus contribute to the development of a legally binding instrument on PAROS and will prevent the placement of weapons in outer space. We are submitting draft resolutions to the First Committee on "No first placement of weapons in outer space" (A/C.1/78/L.53), "Transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities" (A/C.1/78/L.54) and "Further practical measures for the prevention of an arms race in outer space" (A/C.1/78/L.55). We expect that they will garner maximum support and co-sponsorship.

We also intend to submit the traditional Russian draft resolution on international information security (A/C.1/78/L.11). Our document reflects the results of this year's activities of the United Nations Open-ended Working Group on Security of and in the Use of Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs) 2021–2025 and on ICTs themselves, as well as the establishment of a global intergovernmental register of points of contact for the exchange of information on computer attacks and incidents. We urge for support and co-sponsors for our initiative.

We feel compelled to once again bring up the issue of the United States' lack of good faith in fulfilling its obligations regarding the issuance of visas to members of delegations attending United Nations-organized events. This practice is unacceptable and constitutes a gross violation of the United States' international legal obligations. We demand the immediate launch of arbitration proceedings with regard to the host country of United Nations Headquarters. The situation is outrageous, since visas were not issued within the requested time frame to the members of our delegation who were supposed to participate in, among other things, a meeting of experts from the five nuclear possessor members of the Security Council organized by Russia in its capacity as coordinator on the margins of the First Committee. We consider the actions of the United States, which have disrupted that meeting, to be an attempt to undermine the Russian chairmanship of that international format.

Mr. Marschik (Austria): Since this is my first time taking the floor in the First Committee, let me congratulate you, Mr. Chair, as well as the other members of the Bureau, on your election. We look forward to a successful collaboration.

We meet at a time of unprecedented crisis, challenging the very underpinnings of our international cooperation. The multilateral institutions established to foster peace and security, from the Security Council to the Conference of Disarmament, are dysfunctional. The body of international law, from human rights and international humanitarian law to disarmament and non-proliferation instruments, is under pressure. Treaties are undermined rather than implemented. A permanent member of the Security Council is blatantly violating the Charter of the United Nations. Geopolitical tensions create mistrust and fuel arms races in a multitude of arenas, from nuclear weapons and new technologies such as artificial intelligence to the cyber and space domains. The international solutions that we so urgently need to halt and reverse those trends become more challenging and urgent by the day. Some members seem content to continue our work in the same manner as we have for years. I understand that repetition provides a sense of security, and perhaps our annual meetings with the same procedures and statements serve as a form of group therapy to reassure and comfort us with a false sense of stability. But let us not fool ourselves. Let us open our eyes to reality.

As the New Agenda for Peace rightly points out, we are facing intensifying geostrategic competition with eroding arms-control and management frameworks. We must not accept those geopolitical trends as being outside our control. In this forum at the General Assembly, all of us have a shared responsibility to speak up and unite against such negative developments and to strengthen existing treaties and mechanisms. We need to refocus on multilateral cooperation and international law.

One of the key issues that demands a fundamental change in paradigm is the continued existential threat that nuclear weapons pose to all of us. The nuclear taboo has been dramatically challenged by Russia's implicit but unmistakable nuclear threats and its illegal war of aggression against its neighbour Ukraine. We categorically condemn that clear violation of international law by a permanent member of the Security Council and depositary of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).

We have to be clear about one thing. Nuclear threats — suggesting credibility and a readiness to use nuclear weapons — are the very essence of a security paradigm that is based on nuclear deterrence and the threat of mass destruction. That is neither a sustainable

approach to security nor is it morally acceptable or legitimate. It puts the security of the nuclear-weapon States above the security of everyone else. The nuclear status quo is a direct, permanent threat to the security of all humankind. If the precarious theory of nuclear deterrence fails, the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons know no borders. They would affect us all. New research based on new technologies and methods demonstrates just how interlinked and complex those terrible consequences can be and how they can linger on for generations.

Austria rejects any and all nuclear threats, whether explicit or implicit, and irrespective of the circumstances. Any use of nuclear weapons amounts to a violation of international law, including the Charter of the United Nations. Together with a clear majority of States, we did our part to advance progress on nuclear disarmament, as required by the NPT, when we adopted the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). That landmark Treaty is based on new evidence on the catastrophic humanitarian consequences and unacceptable risks of nuclear weapons. It therefore puts at the centre of the debate the legitimate security of all humankind, rather than the assumptions of those who say that nuclear weapons are essential for security and that we should not worry about nuclear deterrent stability. We can simply never know if nuclear deterrence works in any particular crisis, but we know for sure that it can fail. With a comprehensive set of prohibition safeguards and positive obligations on victim assistance and environmental remediation, the TPNW stands for a paradigm shift. We call on all States to sign and ratify the Treaty. That is one concrete step that States can take to strengthen the global disarmament and non-proliferation regime.

We will host a side event on tracking progress towards nuclear disarmament and another on new peer-reviewed research on the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons during this session of the First Committee. Members will also have seen the draft resolutions on the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons (A/C.1/78/L.23) and the TPNW (A/C.1/78/L.24), and we invite everyone to sponsor them.

While the threat of nuclear weapons has been with us for nearly eight decades, humankind is about to cross a truly epochal threshold with autonomous weapon systems. The increasing integration of autonomy into weapon systems raises serious concerns from a humanitarian, legal, security, technological and

ethical perspective. What is the role of humans in the use of force? How can we ensure the compliance of autonomous weapon systems with international law, and what are the implications for human responsibility and accountability? We need to address those issues with urgency, as the research, development and deployment of autonomous weapon systems is progressing much more rapidly than are the international efforts to regulate them. That is an important issue for the United Nations. Together with a cross-regional group of co-sponsors, Austria will therefore introduce a new draft resolution on lethal autonomous weapons for the Committee's consideration.

On a more positive note, we want to welcome the adoption of the Political Declaration on Strengthening the Protection of Civilians from the Humanitarian Consequences Arising from the Use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas, which is a concrete example of how we can collectively uphold our humanitarian goals. We call on all States that have not yet done so to sign the Declaration, and we look forward to working jointly with all stakeholders on its effective implementation.

I have referred to only a few of the many challenges that we face today in the world of arms control. In the interests of time, we will speak in more detail on those and other issues in the various cluster statements. But allow me to finish by quoting the President of the General Assembly, who opened the session two weeks ago stating that

“[w]e do not lack capacity. What we lack is the will to act. By putting aside our differences and bridging divides, we can deliver —we must deliver — peace, progress, prosperity and sustainability to everyone, everywhere.” (*A/78/PV.4, p.7*)

Let us be guided here too, and work to achieve real progress on disarmament and arms control, which is more urgent today than ever.

Mr. Margaryan (Armenia): I would like to congratulate you, Mr. Chair, and the other members of the Bureau on assuming the leadership of the First Committee during the seventy-eighth session of the General Assembly, and to assure you of Armenia's full support for your efforts in guiding the work of the Committee through these challenging times.

The international security architecture continues to suffer from the detrimental effects of strategic

instability, the erosion of arms-control mechanisms, the constant increase in military expenditure worldwide and the weaponization of newly emerging domains. Our unwavering commitment to arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation remains as crucial as ever.

Throughout the years, Armenia has been committed to the implementation of the legally binding Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe and the Vienna Document on Confidence- and Security-Building Measures. However, the integrity of the conventional-arms-control regime in our region has been seriously undermined by Azerbaijan's systematic, intentional and massive violations of its core provisions. That country's well-established record of non-compliance with treaties and regimes in the area of conventional-arms control, unnotified large-scale military exercises, uncontrolled military build-up and a consistent refusal to implement confidence- and security-building measures within the framework of regional arrangements has demonstrated its clear intent to instigate further military aggression in our region. The lack of an adequate reaction from the relevant international and regional structures, or of strong measures in response to Azerbaijan's clear non-compliance with its legally binding obligations, has allowed it to continue to pursue its aggressive policies with impunity.

Very recently, during the high-level week of the General Assembly, Azerbaijan unleashed yet another large-scale offensive against Nagorno-Karabakh on 19 September, in blatant violation of international law and the trilateral statement of 9 November 2020 on a cessation of hostilities. The entire territory of Nagorno-Karabakh, including its capital of Stepanakert and other cities and villages, came under intense and indiscriminate shelling using missiles, heavy artillery, combat uncrewed aerial vehicles and aviation, including prohibited cluster munitions. Hundreds of people were killed, including civilians and children, and critical infrastructure was damaged. That aggression further exacerbated the humanitarian crisis that the people of Nagorno-Karabakh have been facing since the blockade of the Lachin corridor last December, with the intentional use of the starvation of civilians as a method of warfare, in blatant violation of international law and in total disregard of the orders of the International Court of Justice. Within a week that barbaric policy of ethnic cleansing forced more than 100,000 people to flee to Armenia from their homes in Nagorno-Karabakh.

There is no shortage of evidence for the premeditated and well-planned character of the large-scale aggression. It was preceded by a heavy military build-up by Azerbaijan along the line of contact with Nagorno-Karabakh and on the State border with Armenia, and with an accumulation of offensive heavy weaponry, including artillery, multiple rocket launchers, mortars and combat uncrewed aerial vehicles. The preparations for the current aggression were accompanied by a massive disinformation campaign, spreading false allegations about Armenia's so-called provocations in Nagorno-Karabakh, allegations that have regularly been refuted. As was the case in 2020, the indiscriminate targeting of civilians and civilian infrastructure, often with prohibited weapons, served to spread terror and inflict maximum casualties among the population.

The policy of ethnic cleansing in Nagorno-Karabakh, the use of force and the attempts to instigate a new large-scale conflict and destabilize regional security have been unequivocally condemned by many Member States and institutions. On 22 September, the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide issued a statement stressing that

“[m]ilitary action can only contribute to escalating what is already a tense situation and putting the civilian population in the area at risk of violence, including the risk of genocide and related atrocity crimes. All efforts need to be made to prevent violence and sustain peace.”

Every responsible member of the international community should take that into consideration when contemplating any arms-trade deal with that country. The aggressors must be held accountable, and those who enable them to unleash new attacks and commit more atrocity crimes should face justice as well.

Armenia reaffirms its strong commitment to global efforts in the areas of disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control. In that regard, we attach great importance to the full and universal implementation of legally binding international obligations, effective national implementation measures and transparent and result-oriented international cooperation to that end. Any unchecked military build-up accompanied by open threats is a warning sign of a risk of escalation and should therefore be closely monitored and assessed by international organizations, including missions on the ground. As we collectively seek to develop a new

agenda for peace, it will be crucial to strengthen the monitoring, fact-finding and reporting capacities of the United Nations in order to act in a timely manner to identify risks of dangerous escalation and prevent further atrocities.

Mr. Liddle (United Kingdom): The international security and disarmament system that has served the world so well for so many decades is under unprecedented strain. Most egregiously, of course, Russia's illegal war of aggression against Ukraine is trampling on the Charter of the United Nations and the values that underpin it. Russia's conduct of the war has been characterized by brutal violations of international humanitarian law and international norms, and by cynical disinformation. The United Kingdom continues to stand with the Government and the people of Ukraine, who are defending not only their own sovereignty, political independence and territorial integrity but the entire set of principles on which the post-1945 world order was built.

My delegation remains determined to defend and strengthen the regimes we have inherited from our forebears in the face of these and other serious challenges. We must maintain the record of the non-use of nuclear weapons since 1945 and our determination to prevent such weapons from spreading further. We must uphold the norms against the development, stockpiling, transfer and use of biological and chemical weapons, swiftly and strongly condemning the actions of countries that want to flout those norms. Moreover, we must defend the impartiality and expertise of organizations such as the International Atomic Energy Agency and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, which tirelessly implement the norms and instruments that keep us safe.

Nevertheless, we see cause for optimism in several key diplomatic processes on international security and disarmament this year. They include the ninth Review Conference of the States Parties to the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BWC) in December 2022, and the subsequent early meetings this year of the Working Group on the Strengthening of the Biological Weapons Convention; the Group of Governmental Experts on Lethal Autonomous Weapon Systems, within the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons; the establishment in July of the working group on further strengthening the review process of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), and the subsequent first session of the Preparatory Committee

for the 2026 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons; the Open-ended Working Group on Conventional Ammunition and the Open-ended Working Group on Reducing Space Threats through Norms, Rules and Principles of Responsible Behaviours.

All of those processes demonstrated the continued vitality of the arms-control and disarmament community, the exceptional skill, imagination and resilience of their Chairs and the determination of the vast majority of their participants to uphold what we already have and to make progress in addressing emerging threats and challenges. The bad faith of a handful of countries that even if isolated appear determined to block any meaningful progress should not detract from the determination of the majority.

The other thing that those processes have in common is that they point the way to a possible future for arms control and disarmament. In its refresh of its 2021 *Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy*, published in March, the British Government committed to supporting a new agenda for arms control that is multi-domain and multi-capability and that draws together a wider set of actors. We take as our starting point the need to strengthen the vital elements of the existing architecture, such as the Chemical Weapons Convention, the BWC and the NPT, for example through our work to elaborate the principles of transparency, verification and irreversibility in the NPT. However, we must also build on that existing structure, including by updating existing agreements, regulating specific capabilities where appropriate, and looking for opportunities to create new agreements where it is useful and achievable to do so. In doing that, we will expand thinking beyond States to other stakeholders, who will play a critical role in understanding the risks and opportunities of dual-use and other new technologies and in setting the standards that govern them.

In furthering arms control, we will have a pragmatic focus on establishing and regulating behaviours. That does not rule out the possibility of new formal agreements to regulate capabilities but supplements our existing approach. We have been inspired and encouraged by the work on responsible State behaviour that is already well established in the cyber domain, and we believe that the first round of work in the Open-ended Working Group on Reducing Space Threats has demonstrated that this approach

can contribute meaningfully to the prevention of an arms race in outer space. That could also guide future thinking when it comes to other new and emerging technology areas, such as artificial intelligence. At the same time, the United Kingdom will step up its efforts to foster better cooperation and to manage the risks of miscalculation and escalation between major Powers, upholding strategic stability through strategic-level dialogue. All States have a stake in that work.

It is in that context that the United Kingdom will be submitting a draft resolution to the First Committee at this session to create a second Open-ended Working Group on Reducing Space Threats. We brought forward the first draft resolution on the topic in 2020 because we believed we needed a different approach to our shared goal of preventing an arms race in outer space. Our goal was to create a process that was open to all Member States, recognizing that all countries rely on space and therefore have an interest in shaping the normative response to current space security challenges. Although we were disappointed that the first Open-ended Working Group did not adopt a consensus report, we consider it to have been a success. First, it improved our collective understanding of the nature of contemporary space threats; secondly, it demonstrated a widely shared recognition that non-legally-binding measures and political commitments are both valuable and can work together in a complementary and mutually reinforcing way with legally binding instruments, without contradicting the principled position of many States that legally binding instruments are the ultimate goal; and thirdly, it began to illustrate the potential benefits of a behavioural approach in a domain in which capabilities can serve both benign and threatening purposes.

The purpose of the second Open-ended Working Group is to build on the first by further refining the concept of specific norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviours and making recommendations on them as a contribution to the prevention of an arms race in outer space. We would appreciate the ongoing support of the First Committee on that proposal.

How the international security environment will evolve in the coming years is unknowable. But we, the Governments and peoples of the United Nations, have the agency to affect it. Renewing our commitment to the Charter and international law, not just in words but in deeds, and motivated not just by idealism but by pragmatic mutual and common interests, would be a good start. Next year's Summit of the Future

and any processes that may emerge from it could be an opportunity to come together to look afresh at the challenges we face and assess with an open mind the range of possible solutions. We are ready to play our part.

Mr. Chatrnúch (Slovakia): Let me start by congratulating you, Mr. Chair, on your election to the Chair of the First Committee. You can count on support of my delegation.

Slovakia associates itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union (see A/C.1/78/PV.2), and I would like to add the following remarks in my national capacity.

Slovakia strongly condemns the Russian Federation's unprovoked and unjustifiable invasion of Ukraine, which is a blatant violation of international law and of the Charter of the United Nations and its principles. The Russian Federation has been using dangerous and escalatory nuclear rhetoric since its invasion began and has worsened the situation by announcing the deployment of Russian nuclear weapons on the territory of Belarus, a step that Slovakia strongly condemns. We are concerned about the Russian Federation's suspension of the New START Treaty, and we call on it to return to full compliance and fulfil all its obligations under the Treaty. We continue to be deeply concerned about the situation at the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant, which is still illegally occupied by the Russian forces and where all seven of the indispensable pillars of nuclear safety and security of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) have been repeatedly compromised. We urge the Russian Federation to immediately cease its use of force against Ukraine and withdraw all of its forces from the entire territory of Ukraine.

The current international security context, together with the continued dissolution of the arms-control architecture and nuclear stability under stress, is hampering our efforts to achieve progress in nuclear disarmament. Nevertheless, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons remains the cornerstone of the global nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament architecture. We believe that in this new review cycle, more prominence should be given to strategic and nuclear risk-reduction efforts and to the promotion of transparency and accountability on the part of the nuclear-weapon States. The entry into force as soon as possible of the Comprehensive Nuclear-

Test-Ban Treaty is also crucial to achieving nuclear disarmament. We call on all States that have not yet done so to sign and ratify it without further delay. And we support the speedy commencement of negotiations on a fissile-material cut-off treaty in the Conference on Disarmament on the basis of the Shannon mandate.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea's continued development of its nuclear and ballistic-missile programmes represents a serious threat to international peace and security. We are deeply concerned about its continued missile launches of various types and in unprecedented numbers. We are also concerned about the continued escalation of the Islamic Republic of Iran's nuclear programme, which is inconsistent with its commitments under the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. We call on Iran to reverse that nuclear trajectory in order to enable the revitalization of the Plan of Action, and to engage constructively with the IAEA, implement the March 2023 joint statement and resolve all outstanding safeguards issues.

Slovakia remains a strong supporter of the Chemical Weapons Convention. We concluded our membership on the Executive Council of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons this year and will continue to support the Organization both financially and politically. Slovakia also reaffirms its strong support for the Biological Weapons Convention and the global legally binding norm against biological weapons. Strengthening the Convention in the areas of science and technology is crucial to keeping it up to date and capable of addressing the relevant science and technology developments.

Regarding the domain of outer space, the preservation of a safe, secure and sustainable space environment and the prevention of an arms race in outer space are extremely important. We regret that the substantive work and constructive discussions in the Open-ended Working Group on Reducing Space Threats through Norms, Rules and Principles for Responsible Behaviours did not take the form of a consensus report.

Slovakia supports a free, open, stable and secure cyberspace in which fundamental freedoms and the rule of law are observed. In that context, we welcome the work of the Open-ended Working Group on Security of and in the Use of Information and Communications Technologies 2021–2025. We believe that further dialogue on a programme of action on that issue is

important. Establishing such a programme of action as a permanent platform under United Nations auspices would be a pragmatic way forward. Slovakia also appreciates the international initiatives to address the use of artificial intelligence in the military domain and agrees that there is a growing urgency in that regard. We support the work of the Group of Governmental Experts on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems within the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, as well as the so-called two-tier approach and the strengthening of the next mandate of the Group of Governmental Experts.

Slovakia firmly supports the Ottawa Convention and its universal ban on anti-personnel mines. In support of mine action efforts, Slovakia has been providing financial contributions on an annual basis to the United Nations Mine Action Service since 2019. We are determined to explore further ways on how to utilize our demining capacities and experience in that area.

In conclusion, let me express the hope that the First Committee will fulfil its role and contribute to disarmament, peace and security for the sake of the international community.

Ms. Shaheen (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Mr. Chair, on assuming the chairmanship of the First Committee. We wish you every success. We also thank your predecessor, the Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka, for his successful stewardship of the work of the previous session.

The United Emirates aligns itself with the statements made by the representatives of Jordan, on behalf of the Group of Arab States, and Indonesia, on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/78/PV.2).

The United Arab Emirates believes that intensifying multilateral efforts remains the best way to address all aspects of disarmament and international security, especially given the worsening armed conflicts and other challenges that are undermining the international disarmament and non-proliferation regime. In fact we are seeing a regression among States in that area, which is why it is imperative to stress the importance of respecting all the international conventions and instruments on disarmament and non-proliferation, in particular the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).

The NPT is the cornerstone of the nuclear disarmament regime, and it is vital that we take concrete measures to bolster its universal nature and ensure its implementation. Based on our commitment to the non-proliferation regime, my country was keen to conclude its Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). We have also signed the Additional Protocol, which is a credible mechanism for ensuring the peaceful use of nuclear material and facilities. We reiterate our call to States whose nuclear activities are under investigation to cooperate with and respond practically to the IAEA's queries. We also urge them to take the necessary measures to address the international concerns about their nuclear activities and restore confidence in their peaceful nature of their programmes.

In that context, we remain concerned about Iran's continuing development of its nuclear programme, contrary to its international obligations and to the IAEA's reports about pending issues related to the application of the safeguards system in Iran. Iran has also continued to develop its ballistic-missile programme, which undermines regional and international security and stability. The United Arab Emirates therefore joins many States in calling on Iran to honour its international commitments in accordance with the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, the IAEA safeguards and the NPT. It should also cease any activities that could threaten the international non-proliferation regime.

Ensuring sustained security and stability in the Middle East requires stepping up the efforts to make it a zone free of lethal weapons. We look forward to participating in the fourth session of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction, which will take place in November under the presidency of Libya. We thank Lebanon and other brotherly countries that have presided over previous sessions.

The United Arab Emirates condemns the Democratic People's Republic of Korea for its continued development of its ballistic-missile and nuclear programmes in breach of Security Council resolutions. We stress that it must respect its international obligations with a view to maintaining peace and security on the Korean peninsula.

Given the existence of nuclear weapons and the increased threat of their use as some States seek to

possess and develop such weapons through suspicious programmes, we stress the importance of the entry into force of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty and call on the annex 2 States to take urgent steps towards signing and ratifying it to enable that entry into force.

In view of the fact that vital infrastructure, and information infrastructure in particular, is being dangerously and increasingly attacked, the United Arab Emirates emphasizes the importance of addressing security cyberthreats by working together and developing new techniques that can ensure the creation of a secure international information domain. We therefore support frameworks aimed at reinforcing the security of information and communications technologies and preventing the harmful uses of cyberspace, which have become a threat to the entire world.

In conclusion, the United Arab Emirates stresses the importance of reaching consensus on achieving progress in resolving outstanding issues related to disarmament and international security while adopting an approach that promotes collective work under the auspices of the United Nations, with the effective and equal participation of women and young people in all of those areas. We continue to support international efforts to ensure a world free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction.

Mr. Moriko (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, allow me to warmly congratulate you, Mr. Chair, on your election to chair our Committee and to assure you of my country's support and full participation in our discussions. I would also like to commend your predecessor, Ambassador Mohan Pieris of Sri Lanka, for his leadership and skilful handling of the work of the previous session.

Cote d'Ivoire aligns itself with the statements made by the representatives of Indonesia, on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/78/PV.2), and Nigeria, on behalf of the Group of African States (see A/C.1/78/PV.3), and I would like to add some remarks in my national capacity.

As the First Committee is tasked with disarmament and international security issues, my delegation believes that its mandate is based specifically on the essential reason for the United Nations, which is to build a peaceful and stable world. That means that our role is paramount, given the scope of our responsibility and especially in a world that is gripped by regional and international tensions, with increasing

security threats. That mission is truly daunting in the current environment, both in scope and complexity. Nonetheless, it is neither unrealistic nor unachievable if we are committed to the cause on which the survival of humankind and the future of the world depends — our collective security. We believe that only that kind of commitment can create the necessary momentum and achieve the results we need to meet the immense challenges. Nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation are key aspects of maintaining international peace and security and are first among those challenges.

It is imperative that we ensure our full involvement in consolidating the authority and application of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons by strictly adhering to the commitments we have made under it. We must also work to universalize the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and increase its scope and effectiveness. The nuclear-weapon States and all other countries that have not yet done so should plan to join the Treaty. Besides that, support for regional denuclearization efforts through the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones is another necessity, because such zones, like that established in Africa with the Treaty of Pelindaba, have been recognized as effective ways to promote nuclear non-proliferation. Promoting the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, which is aimed at halting both vertical and horizontal proliferation, is also urgent. My delegation therefore reiterates its call to the eight annex 2 States to recognize the importance of the issue and to ratify the Treaty as soon as possible.

Eliminating the risk of the spread or accidental or deliberate use of chemical and biological weapons is another challenge that we must overcome in order to defend our collective security.

In that connection, efforts must be based on improving the effectiveness of the two Conventions that stipulate their destruction and prohibit their optimization, production and stockpiling, namely, the 1972 Biological Weapons Convention and the 1992 Chemical Weapons Convention. Côte d'Ivoire is party to both those legal instruments and has made their implementation a priority. It adopted, *inter alia*, national implementing legislation in 2007 for the Chemical Weapons Convention and, more recently, in October 2022, for the Biological Weapons Convention.

The regulation and management of conventional weapons and ammunition is also a major security

challenge for Africa and all the regions of the world where daily such weapons fuel conflicts, armed violence, terrorism and transnational organized crime, hampering socioeconomic progress as well as the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Ramping up the means to implement the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects could be a useful step, in particular by bolstering technical capacities for developing countries, as envisaged under the specialized training scholarship for small arms and light weapons.

The regulation of the conventional arms trade through the ramping up of the implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty is another tool we can use in addressing their spread. Regarding conventional ammunition, my delegation welcomes the successful conclusion of the work of the Open-ended Working Group to Elaborate a Set of Political Commitments as a New Global Framework That Will Address Existing Gaps in Through-life Ammunition Management, and calls for the implementation by all of the important recommendations made in order to improve the safe and secure management of such ammunition.

The prevention of an arms race in outer space is another priority to be placed at the heart of our deliberations. It is essential to take action to defend the peaceful use of outer space and to prevent the deployment of weapons there as well as the transformation of space into a new theatre for military confrontation.

Côte d'Ivoire, firmly committed to that principle, calls for a common responsibility, especially on the part of States with significant outer space capacities, to refrain from inappropriate actions and engage in responsible behaviour in outer space, in accordance with their obligations under international law.

Cyberspace security also requires determined action on our part, as it is true that cybercrime and all types of illicit use of digital resources, by both States and non-State actors, in particular terrorist groups, gravely threaten the stability of our societies and world peace. Côte d'Ivoire, which is in favour of a reliable, stable and peaceful digital space, has been closely and actively following the work of the Open-ended Working Group on Security of and in the Use of Information and Communications Technologies and welcomes the positive evolution seen in its deliberations. My delegation commends in particular the adoption by consensus in

July of the second midterm report (see A/78/265) of the Group and the significant advances made in the promotion and strengthening of the framework for responsible State behaviour in cyberspace.

Moreover, my country is of the view that considering the ever-changing nature of those challenges, the establishment of a permanent, inclusive and action-oriented mechanism is essential to appropriately respond to the rapid developments in that area.

Côte d'Ivoire believes that the United Nations regional centres for peace and disarmament are an essential element of our collective action to protect global stability, and there should be an intensification of their mission of bolstering the capacity of States. Moreover, ensuring the proper function of disarmament mechanisms and promoting the effective implementation of their mandates is a goal that we must all strive to achieve. We would therefore like to urge that an end be put to the deadlock in the Conference on Disarmament so as to allow it to effectively accomplish its primary mission of carrying out in-depth negotiations on priority disarmament issues.

In conclusion, Côte d'Ivoire calls on the First Committee to take the necessary decisive actions to meet current major expectations in terms of easing international tensions and safeguarding global security.

Mr. Pary Rodríguez (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me at the outset to congratulate you, Mr. Chair, on your election as well as the members of the Bureau that are assisting you in guiding the work of First Committee. You can count on the support of Bolivia.

My delegation aligns itself with the statements made by the delegation of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/78/PV.2) and by the delegation of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines on behalf of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (see A/C.1/78/PV.3) and would like to make the following comments in our national capacity regarding some of the issues that the First Committee will deal with.

The geopolitical tensions facing the world have created uncertainty and instability among peoples and are leading to the polarization of the planet based on hegemonic interests that affect international peace and security. We note with the greatest consternation that sustainable development, climate change and

other priorities are receiving very small amounts of financing. Nevertheless, the major Powers have increased their military spending into the billions, thus weakening multilateralism and eroding the disarmament architecture built over decades within the United Nations.

My country, as stated in our Constitution, is a firm promoter of peace with social justice. We come from a region that is committed to disarmament and the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. That is why we would like to reiterate that the total elimination of nuclear weapons is an imperative for international peace and security.

We also believe that the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) remains one of the essential pillars of international peace and security, which is why we would like to reiterate our commitment to the full and effective implementation of all the provisions of the Treaty and its fundamental principles of disarmament, non-proliferation and the peaceful use of nuclear energy. We call on non-party States, particularly nuclear-possessor States, to accede thereto, in order to achieve the total elimination of that type of weapon.

The argument put forward by some States that nuclear weapons can be used to improve security and serve legitimate military purposes run definitely counter to collective peace and security for humankind.

We reject any type of nuclear testing, in any part of the world, for the purpose of developing or perfecting existing nuclear weapons or developing new ones, and we reiterate the urgent need for the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. Its ratification is testimony to our commitment to nuclear disarmament.

Along those lines, we call on those States that have not yet done so to sign and ratify the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, as that will make it possible to implement fully and effectively article VI of the NPT so as to achieve the ultimate goal of nuclear disarmament and strengthen it, including by strengthening the safeguards regime of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

We believe that the use of weapons and materials of mass destruction such as chemical and biological weapons poses a threat to humankind and to the planet, as they are increasingly prone to falling into the hands

of non-State actors and entities, in particular terrorist groups. Bolivia therefore reaffirms its commitment to the Biological Weapons Convention and rejects the use of such weapons. We also welcome the efforts of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) in seeking to improve the capacity of States parties in using chemicals for peaceful purposes and to respond to threats related to toxic chemical substances. That is why it is very important to ensure the universalization of the Chemical Weapons Convention. Consequently, the OPCW should be guided by the principles of impartiality and non-politicization.

Concerning another topic that the First Committee will tackle, we welcome the conclusions of the Open-ended Working Group to Elaborate a Set of Political Commitments as a New Global Framework That Will Address Existing Gaps in Through-life Ammunition Management. We acknowledge the importance of continuing with discussions at the international, regional and subregional levels to improve the safe and sustainable management of conventional ammunition and to address the associated risks to security such as diversion, illicit trafficking and unplanned explosions.

That is why we support the full and effective implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and the International Tracing Instrument, in order to address problems related to the diversion of and the illicit trade in those types of weapons.

My delegation also welcomes the work of the Open-ended Working Group on Security of and in the Use of Information and Communications Technologies and acknowledges the need to continue working to adopt confidence-building and capacity-building measures aimed at ensuring the safe and effective participation of all States in cyberspace.

Concerning outer space, the increased pace of space activities and technological advances and the influence of new actors in the current geopolitical context could exacerbate present and future threats to the sustainability of outer space. We believe that outer space should be used rationally and equitably and that its exploration should be conducted for exclusively peaceful purposes for the benefit and interest of humankind as a whole, in conditions of equality and

independently of levels of technological, scientific or economic development.

That is why we would like to express the hope that we could start working as soon as possible on creating an international mechanism or legally binding agreement to oversee the strictly peaceful use of outer space.

In conclusion, we call on all States to urgently undertake concrete steps to fully comply with their obligations under disarmament treaties and commitments as the only guarantee to maintain international peace and security while respecting the principles of international law and international humanitarian law.

We must be aware of the fact that only through closer cooperation and multilateral solidarity will we be able to ensure the fulfilment of the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. Bolivia will participate in a constructive manner in order to ensure that we achieve the necessary agreements and successfully conclude our deliberations in the First Committee.

Mr. Pieris (Sri Lanka): Let me congratulate you, Mr. Chair, and the Bureau on your election to this important First Committee. We assure you of our fullest support in guiding our deliberations to a fruitful outcome, and we have every confidence in your competency to take this discussion to its logical end, where we would walk away from here with some outcomes.

Sri Lanka aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/78/PV.2) and wish to make the following observations on our national capacity.

It is said that the prospect of United Nations security action unbound by international law runs like a red thread through the Charter. Members will appreciate that the achievement of peace and security is the *raison d'être* for the States Members of the United Nations. We must therefore endeavour to consider elements that could draw out a comprehensive programme of action through a context-specific approach. We must therefore support such initiatives in order to strike a balance, to incorporate a full range of opinions and to achieve flexibility and tangible results. I do not think that we have a choice about that if we are to move this to a meaningful end.

It is no secret that the pace has been slow in reaching the intended goals in the First Committee. In that context, I believe that we must make our best efforts at these meetings to deliver a set of substantive recommendations to achieve universal peace and security. That would be my appeal to all my friends who are here.

We meet at a time when the international security architecture is fraught with danger and strained at the seams, as someone described it. Super-Power rivalries have intensified and have spiralled into creating chaos in almost all human activity, whether on land or in the air, sea or cyberspace, and now in outer space. The frequency and intensity of nuclear rhetoric has assumed alarming proportions, as have moves to weaponize all domains, including cyberspace and outer space.

Those many of us who have over the years espoused multilateral solutions to disarmament and non-proliferation in the endeavour to create a peaceful world have been forced to endure the economic and other negative consequences brought about by direct conflict and the resultant recriminatory measures, which have affected the highest of human values globally, sad to say, which have hitherto been undertaken by those Member States that have the greatest responsibility in such matters. Our expectations have been shattered. It is therefore not difficult to understand that it was in that deteriorating international security environment that two Review Conferences of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) have taken place without producing an outcome document.

That only reflects the challenges and divisions among Member States in addressing critical issues relating to nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. We must, however, despite the disparities, look at these discussions as opportunities to assess progress, identify areas of concern and develop strategies to strengthen the implementation of the Treaty. We must make every effort to bridge the gaps between the different perspectives and build nothing but trust among Member States.

My delegation's considered view is that the inability to produce an outcome at previous conferences should serve as a catalyst for a renewed commitment and for more concerted efforts to achieve the objectives of such conferences. Our failures must be the reason for our success, in other words. No Member State is too big to disarm on its own, and none is too small to make a

contribution. Last year we pledged that it was high time to stand up to those in possession of such weapons of mass destruction and declare that we cannot wait any longer. Let us steadfastly stand our ground.

It is in that context that my delegation wishes to reiterate the importance of the very principles of multilateral disarmament that have brought a beacon of hope for humankind to save us from global annihilation. Over the years, as we have seen, the NPT, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) have formed the bulwark of the international treaty system seeking to rid the world of nuclear weapons. I am pleased to say that Sri Lanka in July ratified the CTBT and, during the recently concluded high-level week, acceded to the TPNW.

Despite the achievements of the CTBT and the progressive development of its verification regime, we remain deeply concerned at the prolonged delay in its entry into force. Delays in ratification can be undoubtedly attributed to multiple reasons. It must be appreciated that such delays can hinder progress in achieving nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and the promotion of the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

Member States must recognize the significance of the nuclear treaties and the role they play in enhancing global security. We must intensify diplomatic efforts and encourage ratification. It is equally important that we engage with States that have not yet ratified in an endeavour to understand their reservations and help in finding common ground and addressing any outstanding issues.

Should we consider a fresh start that is sensitive to present geopolitical issues and be open to greater accommodation and flexibility, with the goal of achieving our final objective?

In keeping with its long-standing commitment to nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament, Sri Lanka was pleased to accede to the TPNW, and we urge all States to commit to a nuclear-free world.

Let me turn briefly to the issue of cyberspace. The cyberdomain today has become a vital component in our endeavour to create a safer and more secure world as well as for mutual prosperity, given the increasing relevance of e-commerce and day-to-day functions in the digital sphere. The loose arrangements in the

regulatory oversight of cyberspace must be looked at urgently.

Despite all those efforts, cyberthreats remain a concern not only for Sri Lanka but for all Member States.

Sri Lanka also welcomes the consensual adoption of the outcome documents of the Open-ended Working Group on Developments in the Field of Information and Telecommunications in the Context of International Security.

The convening of the substantive session of the United Nations Disarmament Commission this April was another welcome measure. I cannot but make reference to the fact that the use of conventional weapons and the number of conflicts around the world are presently at their highest levels, which is most worrying.

I will leave you, Mr. Chair, and my friends with a quick mention of Rousseau, a social thinker and philosopher who believed in the innate goodness of man and his perfectibility.

The Chair: I am sincerely grateful to the representative of Sri Lanka for his time and the advice he gave me as Chair.

Mrs. González (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would first like to echo the congratulations of all the delegations that congratulated you, Mr. Chair, this morning on your election, and I can assure you that you can count on the support of our delegation for the successful discharge of your mission.

In line with the priorities of our national policy, as reflected in our foreign policy and in Uruguay's international commitment to the United Nations on the international peace and security agenda, which includes the work of the First Committee, it is an honour for my delegation to be a member of the Bureau for this session, and we are grateful for the support of the region in that respect. I congratulate my colleague Mr. Matías Eustathiou on his appointment to the Bureau.

As concerns disarmament and non-proliferation, Uruguay, as a non-nuclear-weapon State, upholds its commitment to strengthening its regime by supporting multilateralism in its efforts to promote universal and complete disarmament, with strict adherence to the international regime created for those purposes.

Currently there are more than 50 conflict hotspots around the world, and the nuclear threat is more present than ever. For that reason and in that context, it is

necessary to step up efforts to achieve international peace and security. In that respect, Uruguay is committed to international law and multilateralism as the only way to resolve conflicts, and we advocate for the prohibition of the use of force as a method of intimidation or coercion among nations.

Once again, my delegation reiterates the importance of the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, and we urge the annex 2 States to ratify the Treaty to ensure its subsequent entry into force. We urge all States members of the international community to maintain their moratorium on nuclear tests or other explosive devices of that nature.

Uruguay is in favour of a greater commitment on the part of nuclear-weapon States to ensure strict and effective international control against the possible use or threat of use of such weapons, as well as demanding their early disarmament.

In that respect, my delegation acknowledges the particular value of the work of the First Committee, and we hope that the efforts made at this session will be successful, because, as was previously mentioned, there is a lot of work ahead of us, especially bearing in mind the outcome of previous conferences.

I would also like to mention a scourge that is causing a major problem in the Latin American region and that is particularly important for my region and my country — the use of conventional weapons and their proliferation to and from conflict zones, in particular their trafficking and trade by parties to conflict, leading directly to the suffering and deaths of civilians. As has been noted earlier, the diversion of such weapons has had serious consequences for my country, and we therefore reiterate our commitment to the Arms Trade Treaty, of which Uruguay is currently the Vice-President, together with Australia, Latvia and South Africa.

We value the work of the Open-ended Working Group to Elaborate a Set of Political Commitments as a New Global Framework That Will Address Existing Gaps in Through-life Ammunition Management and firmly support its annual progress report. Uruguay supports the elaboration of a normative framework of universal acceptance on the management of ammunitions throughout their life cycle, from the point of production to their elimination or use. We need to maintain a comprehensive approach that takes account of the need of the countries of the Global South

for assistance and cooperation, capacity-building, technology transfer and know-how, as we have stated in that Working Group. We will elaborate further when those issues are considered during the thematic debate.

It is becoming ever more urgent to make the efforts necessary to guarantee peace and security in the field of information and communications technologies (ICT). Malicious ICT activities are a real and growing problem that requires ever-greater cooperation among States and between the public and private sectors to protect the integrity, operation and availability of our national cybersecurity systems. To address those real and potential threats, it is vital that we continue to develop mutual assistance measures, taking into account the differing capacities of each country to face those challenges.

In that respect, and as we have stated repeatedly, we need, at the national and regional levels, to promote cooperation in all its forms, in addition to the exchange of good practices and information, which are vital to the work of the Open-ended Working Group on Developments in the Field of Information and Telecommunications in the Context of International Security 2021-2025.

Uruguay reiterates once again its commitment to the international norms derived from the Group of Governmental Experts as well as to all of the documentation and norms that flow from the efforts of the Working Group, stressing also, of course, the fact that international law applies to cyberspace. We also understand the need and advocate for the creation of a universal instrument that would include all Members of the Organization.

We deplore the fact that following three weeks of intensive discussions, the Disarmament Commission was not able to achieve consensus in its Working Group on nuclear weapons. However, we value the progress made by the working group that includes outer space, which, as various delegations have mentioned, is a very important issue that must be considered and on which we need to make progress regarding international regulations on the peaceful use of outer space. I wish to reaffirm our conviction that outer space should be free from the deployment of weapons and that countries also have different capacities, and we reiterate once again that international cooperation is very important for countries such as mine and those of my region.

Lastly, but no less important, we stress the importance of gender equality in all disarmament-related aspects. In that respect, we support all initiatives promoting that goal in the framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as well as the women and peace and security agenda.

As I said earlier, at future meetings we will elaborate on the position of my country on certain issues.

Ms. Zacarias (Portugal): I would like to congratulate you, Mr. Chair, and the members of the Bureau on your appointment. You can count on Portugal's full support and cooperation during this session.

Portugal fully aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of the European Union (see A/C.1/78/PV.2). I should like now to offer the following additional remarks in my national capacity.

The nuclear-disarmament and non-proliferation architecture is eroding. The shadow cast by nuclear weapons challenges international law and the norms, rules and principles of an international order based on responsible behaviour and multilateral cooperation founded on the Charter of the United Nations.

Russia's rhetoric on the unprovoked, unjustified and illegal military aggression against Ukraine has jeopardized the principles of collective security. Hence we will continue to provide political, diplomatic, military and humanitarian support, standing with Ukraine for as long as it takes. Without Ukraine's right to self-defence, there can be no sustainable peace and security in Europe.

Russia was once again the main opponent of a consensus on the final document of the first Preparatory Committee for the 2026 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). However, we highlight both the adoption of the Chair's document and the constructive discussions that led the way towards next year's Preparatory Committee. We urge every State that has not yet joined the NPT to adhere to it.

To strengthen the NPT regime, it is essential that the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty enter into force. We congratulate the most recent States parties to ratify the Treaty, especially our fellow members of the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries Equatorial Guinea, Sao Tome and Principe and Timor-Leste. We urge all States that have not yet signed or

ratified that instrument to do so, as it will enhance international security and stability.

In that framework, we commend the immediate start of negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty in the Conference on Disarmament. That forum should be enlarged in order to ensure greater representativeness.

Allow me to make four additional points.

First, on Russia, we are deeply concerned at Russia's announcement of a nuclear-weapons deployment to Belarus, in the light of the NPT and the Budapest Memorandum.

Secondly, on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, we strongly condemn the nuclear tests and the launch of ballistic missiles that it carried out. We urge North Korea to cease its illegal activities and to abide by its international obligations, besides re-engaging in a credible and meaningful dialogue with the international community towards a complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization of the Korean peninsula. Indo-Pacific stability depends on Pyongyang's compliance with international law.

Thirdly, on Iran, we encourage the resumption of diplomatic negotiations with a view to the implementation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, which remains the best available option for ensuring a peaceful nuclear programme. It is crucial that Tehran fulfil its obligations towards the International Atomic Energy Agency on all open issues.

An effective transition day would not only provide greater leverage over security dilemmas but also promote regional confidence-building, which may evolve into a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction.

Fourthly, it is important to stress the adoption by consensus of a final document at the ninth Review Conference of the States Parties to the Biological and Toxins Weapons Convention. Regrettably, the outcome was different at the fifth Review Conference of the Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention, where consensus on a final document was blocked by Russia and Syria.

To that end, we fully support the Secretary-General's Mechanism for Investigation of the Alleged Use of Chemical, Biological or Toxin Weapons considering its objective nature, which allows States to request prompt investigations in response to possible violations.

On new technologies, emerging and disruptive technologies blur the lines when it comes to the challenges that we face. We need to address weapons systems whose effects cannot be limited as required by international law and international humanitarian law. All in all, we see this debate as a political and human-centric approach to new technologies, including artificial intelligence, where rules and principles of responsible behaviour must be developed.

Developments related to armed unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) — commonly known as drones — have traditionally not been the subject of multilateral deliberations in disarmament bodies. However, as the proliferation of armed UAVs has become a noteworthy trend and their acquisition has become more prevalent, there is a compelling case for holding multilateral exchanges of views on the potential peace and security challenges associated with them. Portugal stands ready to facilitate such exchanges in the near future.

The prevention of an arms race in outer space is of the utmost importance so that strategic balance and stability can prevail. We would like to emphasize the adoption by consensus of the second annual progress report of the Open-ended Working Group on Security of and in the Use of Information and Communications Technologies, since there is no international instrument regulating the use of cyberspace. We welcome the adoption of the report of the Group of Governmental Experts on lethal autonomous weapons systems, although consensus was difficult to attain.

Disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control are key elements in preventing conflict, forging an enduring peace and fostering long-term development. Shaping peaceful and inclusive societies should be achieved with the full and effective participation of women in all decision-making processes. Combined with education, such input would lead to the empowerment of youth and children.

We are assessing the Secretary-General's policy brief on the New Agenda for Peace and look forward to receiving the final report and to following up on its recommendations.

Portugal is a strong advocate of effective multilateralism, securing the principles of the Charter of the United Nations. We share the high expectations of so many Member States for the Summit of the Future, which will be a landmark event on the path towards that

goal. We are deeply committed to leveraging the First Committee's role in rebuilding trust among Member States and charting a course to achieve meaningful progress on the disarmament agenda.

Mr. Flores (Honduras) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation would like to congratulate you, Mr. Chair, and the other members of the Bureau on your election to lead the work of the First Committee at this seventy-eighth session.

My delegation aligns itself with the statements made by the representative of El Salvador on behalf of the Central American Integration System (see A/C.1/78/PV.2); by the representative of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines on behalf of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (see A/C.1/78/PV.3); and by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/78/PV.2).

My delegation would first reiterate its commitment to the continued work of the United Nations on general and complete disarmament, non-proliferation and the implementation of international agreements on disarmament and arms control, including small arms and light weapons and their ammunition, to maintain collective peace and security for the good of all humankind.

As a founding Member of the United Nations, we are committed to defending and strengthening compliance with international law, in particular international humanitarian law, maintaining human responsibility and accountability for the use of force. On this point, given the accelerating advance of technology for military purposes, including artificial intelligence, it is for my country important to stress that responsibility for the use of force rest with human beings and that they should therefore remain responsible for making decisions on the use of force as subjects of law.

We would echo the concerns expressed regarding the increase in military spending and call for such expenditures to be used for common well-being in such urgent social areas as the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which, because of lack of financing, has dim prospects in terms of achieving its goals.

Honduras has been consistent in reaffirming its commitment to disarmament and its adherence to international instruments emanating from the United

Nations as well as from hemispheric and regional bodies in the area of disarmament, confidence-building measures and arms control.

The possible use or threat of the use of nuclear weapons is legally unacceptable and morally repugnant, as underscored by Mrs. Nakamitsu at the beginning of this session of the First Committee (see A/C.1/78/PV.2). The only way to put an end to the threat posed by nuclear weapons is the complete elimination thereof. Honduras condemns nuclear tests and the modernization and technological development of new types of weapons and their delivery systems and is in favour of the elimination of weapons of mass destruction through multilateral negotiations, based on the principles of verification, irreversibility and transparency, while at the same time we categorically affirm that international humanitarian law is applicable in the context of all deliberations on general and complete disarmament.

My country, as a State party to the Tlatelolco Treaty, supports initiatives aimed at the creation of other zones free of nuclear weapons. Therefore, as a contribution to international peace and security, my country reiterates its call on all countries of the world to commit to using nuclear energy exclusively for peaceful purposes and for scientific cooperation in a responsible manner.

We also join the call for progress to be made on specific measures to avoid a possible disaster due to the use or manipulation of nuclear weapons. We welcome the convening of next month of the second Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, and we are certain that the complementarity between that Treaty and the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons is tangible and contributes to promoting the achievement of the goal of the complete elimination of nuclear weapons, with a view to achieving a world free of such weapons.

We also abide by the principle of the indivisibility of international security, where all States have a responsibility to contribute to the consolidation of an international order based on cooperation and regulated by norms, independently of the size or power of a State.

Honduras supports the use of outer space exclusively for peaceful purposes and is in favour of strengthening the international norms applicable to States in the area of information and communications technologies in the context of international security, promoting actions and strategies to strengthen cybersecurity and the use

of safe, stable, accessible and peaceful cyberspace regulated by legally binding norms.

My delegation stresses the need for a genuine, ethical and transparent policy regarding multilateral disarmament mechanisms and would like to make an appeal to conduct responsible negotiations in good faith on the most effective measures to begin to put an end to the arms race.

Hundreds of illicit weapons remain in circulation and play a key role in exacerbating and prolonging conflicts and armed violence, crime and migration. In that situation, the effective control of small arms and light weapons, including ammunition, remains as urgent as ever.

We in Honduras are victims of the illicit manufacture and trafficking of small arms and light weapons and their ammunition, which is closely related to the challenges of sustainable development and gender equality and has an impact on the lives of men, women and children. In my country, that situation is not something that is abstract but an everyday reality. That is why we request international cooperation in achieving the goals of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and the International Tracing Instrument by promoting the implementation of more effective controls to reduce and eradicate diversion of such weapons to non-State actors or unauthorized users.

My country also would like to see an achievable agenda to reduce the human suffering caused by the illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons and related ammunition in all its aspects and to promote respect for the lives and dignity of human beings by promoting a culture of peace with the support of the United Nations and in the broader framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the women and peace and security agenda and the Secretary-General's Agenda for Peace.

To conclude, my delegation would like to stress the following.

First, I would highlight the important work carried out in my country by the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Latin America to implement disarmament measures in various areas, as well as efforts of the United Nations disarmament bodies.

Secondly, regarding the gender perspective, my delegation believes that progress on the rights of women is closely related to progress on the topic of disarmament. Bearing that in mind, we stress the importance of the existence of a critical mass of highly qualified women in this area, many of whom are present in this room. My country is sure that the quality of the results of the quest for peace will depend significantly on the meaningful participation of women in decision-making on disarmament.

Mr. Sekeris (Greece): I would like to congratulate you, Mr. Chair, and the other members of the Bureau on your appointment. You can count on our support in your endeavours. I think that the most tangible way of showing my support now is to be brief, which I have promised to be.

First, Greece fully aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of the European Union (EU) earlier (see A/C.1/78/PV.2) and would like to contribute a very few remarks in our national capacity.

At the recent ministerial meeting for the preparation of the Summit of the Future, our Minister for Foreign Affairs highlighted Greece's particular interest in the New Agenda for Peace, which can shape new responses to existing and emerging threats.

Today the global community is at a crossroads, with the collective security mechanisms under duress. Disarmament negotiating bodies deliberate under the shadow of war in Ukraine, and despite their sincere efforts to remain steadfast to their respective mandates, progress is often painstakingly slow.

The First Committee must at this session take stock of recent developments and assess ways to overcome current hurdles. Revitalizing multilateral disarmament negotiations, especially after the disappointing outcome of the first preparatory session for the new review cycle of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), must be considered an urgent priority.

Greece remains a strong advocate of our common goal of nuclear disarmament and considers the NPT as the cornerstone of the disarmament architecture. Echoing the statements of many other Member States, we also stress the vital importance of the fissile material cut-off treaty and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

Greece also fully supports the work of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and

the personal engagement of its Director General, Mr. Grossi, to ascertain that nuclear safety and security is guaranteed at the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant in Ukraine and that all IAEA safeguards on all nuclear material are maintained. For Greece, adherence to and respect for the safeguard agreements and the Agency's safety standards and security architecture is non-negotiable.

We are also concerned by the lack of progress in reviving the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. Missing that window of opportunity will have detrimental effects for regional and global stability, which are already under severe strain. The EU has been a steadfast supporter of the revitalization of the JCPOA.

Greece will also remain a steadfast supporter of conventional arms-control instruments. We welcome the adoption of the final report of the Open-ended Working Group to Elaborate a Set of Political Commitments as a New Global Framework That Will Address Existing Gaps in Through-life Ammunition Management.

My country will also continue to work for the promotion and deepening of international cooperation in the space domain and the conduct of space activities in strict accordance with international law.

Finally, I would like to state that Russia's unprovoked and unjustified military aggression against Ukraine, which has been condemned repeatedly and in the strongest possible terms, has at the same time severely impacted multilateral negotiations in disarmament and non-proliferation, as the recent outcome of the first preparatory session of the new review cycle of the NPT as well as the outcome of the tenth review cycle indicate.

The United Nations system is best suited to addressing, negotiating and ultimately resolving the challenges facing our global community. However, that manifest violation of international law and the Charter of the United Nations constitutes an alarming development.

To conclude, I would like once again to reiterate Greece's resolute support for the First Committee's work towards the achievement of our common goal for general and complete disarmament and the creation of a peaceful and prosperous future.

The Chair: I thank the Ambassador of Greece for being very brief and hope that other delegations will follow his perfect example.

I shall now call on those delegations that have requested to speak in exercise of the right of reply. May I remind members that statements in the exercise of the right of reply are limited to five minutes for the first intervention and to three minutes for the second intervention.

Mr. Kim (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): My delegation is compelled to take the floor to exercise its right of reply in response to the provocative statements made by some Western countries yesterday and today.

We categorically reject the allegations of Western countries, as they constitute an affront to the sovereignty of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and flagrant interference in the internal affairs of a sovereign State. It is an intolerable double standard that the Western countries are terming the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's justified exercise of a legitimate right to self-defence as a provocation and threat while intentionally turning a blind eye to the unabated military provocations of the United States in pursuit of its extremely hostile policy. The international community vividly remembers the criminal track record of the United States and its NATO allies, which committed crimes against humanity in the former Yugoslavia, Iraq, Libya and Afghanistan in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries under the banner of international peace and security.

The United States and its NATO satellite States are intensifying their joint nuclear missions and frequently conducting large-scale military exercises in the region. What makes the situation even more precarious is that NATO is even reaching out to the Asia-Pacific region and engaging in various kinds of United States-led joint military exercises in blind pursuit of the Indo-Pacific strategy of the United States aimed at hegemony and domination. Such dangerous acts inevitably contribute to raising the stakes in terms of an armed conflict in the region.

In the same vein, United States and NATO vassal forces triggered the Ukrainian crisis by systematically encroaching upon Russia's strategic security and interests through ceaseless military threats and pressure. At present, the United States and NATO satellite countries are reaping huge profits from the provision of lethal armaments of all kinds to the battlefield in Ukraine. That is the true identity of the United States

and NATO, imbued with a cold-war mentality and bloc confrontation approach.

It is nonsensical and outrageous for them to sound the alarm over non-existent arms deals. They must stop once and for all their false-flag campaign to tarnish the image of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, a dignified State Member of the United Nations, and scrap arms deliveries, which cause bloodshed and prolong the war.

The United States-Japan-South Korea triangular military alliance, which is clearly hostile towards the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and its neighbouring countries, and NATO, the mastermind of the Ukrainian crisis, are just cancer-like entities jeopardizing the international order based on the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and posing a grave threat to global peace and security.

The United States, together with the United Kingdom and Australia, are seriously undermining the global non-proliferation regime by enforcing the trilateral security partnership between Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States despite condemnation by the international community.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States are technically at war and, accordingly, the claim regarding the alleged implementation of Security Council resolutions is nothing more than a brigandish demand to surrender all sovereign rights to the United States, a belligerent party. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea has never recognized Security Council resolutions that infringe upon the rights of a sovereign State, or will it ever be bound by them in future.

If the United States and other hostile forces try to deny or tamper with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's constitutional position as a nuclear-weapon State by imposing denuclearization, that will be regarded as a most serious violation of its sovereignty and Constitution, imposing a renunciation of its Constitution and social system.

We remain committed to taking the strongest and most overwhelming countermeasures to deter all attempts by hostile forces to deprive the Democratic People's Republic of Korea of its inalienable sovereign rights and will firmly defend by every means its status

as a nuclear-weapon State and the supreme interests of its national security against outside hostile acts.

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

Mr. Hansen (European Union): The present statement comes on top of the statement already delivered on behalf of the European Union (EU) on the first day of proceedings (see A/C.1/78/PV.2).

We were surprised at the fact that Russia has exercised its right of reply twice already during the general debate, thus speaking so far, cumulatively, three times longer than any other Member State and doing so in order to pursue its misleading narrative and false accusations, elements of which were reiterated today once again. We deeply regret that, as we do not want the First Committee to be taken hostage to Russia's recriminations. Instead, we want to focus on substance and what is at stake in the First Committee. But after hearing the Russian false narrative over the past days, we felt it important to set the facts straight, so we will be brief.

First, we strongly reject Russia's unfounded allegations of Ukraine developing biological and chemical weapons, an allegation that was repeated here today. That is another example of Russian propaganda that aims to distract from the real issue, which is Russia's war of aggression against a sovereign Member State.

Russia is trying to divert attention from its atrocities in Ukraine by trying to normalize its occupation and shift the blame to countries that support Ukraine. In arguing that the West has not understood the purpose of Russia's war, Russian representatives tend to forget that it is not only the West but also the much wider General Assembly membership that has condemned Russia's aggression against Ukraine through several General Assembly resolutions.

The same membership recalled that the use of military force and coercion to change borders has no place in the twenty-first century and that Russia must withdraw its troops. As such, the General Assembly has acknowledged that Russia's behaviour is putting international peace and security at risk by blatantly violating Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity, core principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and in international law.

As already noted in our general statement, the disarmament and non-proliferation architecture has

been under considerable pressure for some time. Russia's war of aggression is further straining that architecture, including by Russia's announcement to suspend its participation in New START. We call on Russia to immediately return to compliance and fulfil all its obligations, including by facilitating New START inspections on Russian territory and by returning to participation in the Treaty's implementation body, the Bilateral Consultative Commission.

Russia's latest announcement that it would withdraw from the Treaty on Conventional Arms Forces in Europe further erodes the international arms control architecture, to the detriment of collective security.

Russia is solely responsible for having put the safety and security of Ukraine's nuclear facilities at grave risk with its aggression, potentially endangering the people of Ukraine and those of neighbouring States and other countries. The international community will hold Russia accountable for its aggression against Ukraine, including when it comes to the nuclear safety and security risks that it is causing.

Lastly, the EU cannot remain silent over the outrageous use by the Russian representatives during these proceedings of a Nazi-related reference to the EU candidate country Ukraine. We call on Russia to immediately drop such absurd rhetoric. It is in the interest of United Nations debates and out of respect for a large part of this room that such words not be repeated.

Mr. Vorontsov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): First and foremost, I wanted to react to what was just stated by the representative of the European Union. We reject all the baseless accusations that were made and truly hope that the European Union is not challenging the right of the Russian Federation under the rules of procedure of the General Assembly to use its right of reply to react to such unrealistic statements.

We truly hope that representatives of the European Union will strictly abide by their status as observer to the General Assembly, including with regard to the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly, and will use its right of reply only once on each agenda item.

Due to the baseless statements made about Russia's violations of the Budapest Memorandum, we would like to recall that the memorandum is one component of a package of agreements, which, as a political declaration, placed obligations equally on all participants. Having signed those documents, Russia unflinchingly adhered to

them. However, the countries of the West, which have historically striven to rip Ukraine away from Russia forever, have deliberately disregarded the sovereignty of that young, multifaceted and therefore extremely fragile country.

The United States and its allies unceremoniously interfered in the internal and external affairs of Kyiv, forcing them towards a Western-oriented future without any alternatives. Despite Ukraine's original neutral status, it was dragged into a bloc scheme of confrontation with Russia, cynically playing on the Russophobic and nationalistic views of a small part of the population. When the achievement of those plans became difficult, the West sharply raised the stakes and assisted in a bloody coup. The radicals who took over in Kyiv provoked an acute crisis within the country. Refusing to acknowledge the interests of a significant portion of the Ukrainian population, they definitively divided it. That brought into question the very existence of Ukraine as a unified, full-fledged viable State. The agreements of 1994 were also violated by the destabilizing approach adopted by Washington and its allies towards the unbridled expansion of NATO and the military-political overtaking of post-Soviet territory, to the detriment of the fundamental security interests of Russia. That runs counter to the contents of the Budapest package of documents, which includes provisions similar to the principle of equal and indivisible security and expresses a commitment to building the architecture of European security together.

Kyiv itself did not adhere to its Budapest obligations, in particular those that were supposed to counter the rise in aggressive nationalism and chauvinism. Kyiv openly encouraged nationalism in its radical forms. The glorification of Nazi criminals, which today is given a standing ovation in the Parliaments of some Western countries, has become part of State policy and ideology. Ultranationalist militants have been involved in punitive operations in eastern Ukraine, which has only strengthened the resolve to fight among the part of the population that honours the victory over Hitler's and Bandera's Nazism. The desire to defend their beliefs and vital interests compelled the inhabitants of some regions to exercise the right to self-determination.

Ukraine's unity and territorial integrity have therefore been violated primarily by Kyiv's own destructive policies and the harmful interference of the West. Russia's obligations under the Budapest Memorandum do not apply to such circumstances. We

are not obliged to recognize the coups d'état in Ukraine and its renunciation of its neutral status, forcing regions of that country to remain part of it against the will of the local population and ignoring the increasing threats emanating from Ukrainian territory. That is the reality, not a twisted version, of the implementation of the Budapest Memorandum, and that reality is the one that ought to be taken into account in discussions of these issues of international security in the First Committee, instead of the lies that are being put forward as the truth by Ukraine and the countries of the West that aid and abet its behaviour.

Ms. Steward (United States of America): I take the floor to respond to the intervention — or invention, to be more accurate — of our Russian colleague. The Russian position seems to be based on the assumption that speaking often and loudly, while repeating obvious fabrications, will somehow make those fabrications true.

We can all see that Russia's various allegations have no basis in reality. It is not the United States that represents a threat to the international order, but the Russian Federation. We all know which country violated the Charter of the United Nations, as well as the territorial integrity of a neighbour by invading Ukraine. We all see which country is illegally occupying the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant. We all know which country has threatened the possible use of nuclear weapons and is no longer participating in its last strategic bilateral arms control treaty with the United States. We all see which country has recently used chemical weapons, including on foreign soil, and made false accusations about defensive biological programmes, from which Russia itself has historically benefited. We all know which country has threatened to shoot down satellites belonging to other countries. In other words, it is Russia that is bent on challenging the international order that we all hold so dear — an order and architecture that the United States, along with so many of us in this room, are doing our utmost to preserve.

This is not a United States-Russia divide, no matter how many times Russia tries to pretend that that is so. This is a division between fact and fiction. Quite apart from Russia's rhetoric, we also know which country is disrupting and systematically blocking United Nations processes, be it within the Security Council, the review process of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons or the Open-ended Working Group on Reducing Space Threats, or here in this room.

It is Russia that is holding essential United Nations work hostage in the name of its delusionary war against Ukraine. Let us not forget that, while we sit here listening to such delusions, Russian forces are actively killing men, women and children in Ukraine.

As for the visa issue, once again, in the interest of fact versus fiction, we note that Deputy Foreign Minister Ryabkov is quoted in the press this morning as admitting that the visas had been issued.

Mr. Al Ashkar (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): I requested the floor to respond to the statements delivered by the representatives of Sweden, Italy and Portugal containing baseless allegations against my country. My delegation categorically rejects the content of those three statements, and I would like to make the following points in order to reflect matters in a factual way.

What impeded an outcome document at the fifth Review Conference of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention was the insistence by some Western countries to use the Conference's forum to serve their selfish interests and to insert controversial paragraphs on the so-called International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism. Syria and other States parties have repeatedly indicated that they refuse to acknowledge the Mechanism and its outcomes because it is non-consensual and illegal. Due to the pressure exerted by those countries, the document that was presented did not take into consideration the proposals and views put forward by a number of countries that cannot be ignored, including Syria. That happened despite their repeated attempts to introduce amendments to the document.

Together with other States, Syria sought consensus on that document without politicization and without mentioning non-consensual mechanisms. However, Western pressure and politicization prevented that consensus, resulting in preventing the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) from upholding the responsibilities mandated to it as a means to ensure the technical, professional, impartial and independent implementation of all the provisions of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC).

My delegation reiterates its categorical rejection of all false allegations and accusations regarding Syria's use of toxic chemical material. We also reiterate that Syria has no such toxic weapons, and that we have never used them in our war against terrorists or

others, even in more complex field situations, since we do not possess such weapons in the first place. We emphasize that armed terrorist organizations and their operators are the ones that have forged incidents of using chemical weapons to serve their anti-Syrian interventionist agendas.

In conclusion, my delegation reiterates its condemnation of the use of chemical weapons anywhere, at any time, by any party and under any circumstances. We once again reiterate Syria's full cooperation and transparency with the OPCW and our fulfilment of all our obligations under the Convention. In 2013, Syria took a strategic decision to accede to the CWC and implemented it immediately before the Convention's entry into force. We presented detailed information about our chemical programme and completely destroyed all our stockpiles and production facilities within a record period despite our difficult circumstances at the time.

The Chair: May I remind members that statements in the exercise of the right of reply are limited to three minutes for the second intervention.

Mr. Vorontsov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We categorically reject the accusations voiced by the delegation of the United States, which have no basis in reality. That is yet another attempt by Washington to accuse Russia of every mortal sin and to shift responsibility, as we say, from someone who is guilty to someone who is not. We do not intend to accept that, and we will respond reactively to any such attempts in order to bring the voice of truth to those sitting in this room and not to allow the empire of lies to impose its insinuations here against Russia.

We strongly hope that the delegation of the United States in no way challenges the right of the Russian Federation to defend its position on platforms where the principle of consensus prevails. We believe that it is very dangerous to do that. It undermines the possibility of the international community to act on the basis of consensus and to take the interests of all States into account in the work of the international community and the United Nations. It is once again an attempt, in a condescending and hegemonic tone, to impose its will on other States and to try to interpret the principles of the functioning of international platforms, which were created not by the United States, but by the entire international community.

As for the issue of visas, I would once again like to repeat that the United States of America uses the practice of manipulating its privileged position as the host State on which the Headquarters of the United Nations is located, and it influences the issue of the composition of delegations of States Members of the United Nations, in particular the delegation of the Russian Federation. That practice is a blatant violation of the legal obligations of the United States under the 1947 United Nations Headquarters Agreement, which provides for unimpeded travel to the United Nations Headquarters district. We do not intend to tolerate that kind of irresponsible behaviour.

As for the activities of the “nuclear five”, I confirm that visas for two representatives who are supposed to take part in the respective event have not been issued, and we see that as an attempt to undermine the Russian presidency in that international format.

Ms. Steward (United States of America): First, to be clear, the United States is firmly committed to upholding its obligations under the United Nations Headquarters Agreement. Any concerns regarding host country-related matters, including those related to visa issuance, should be discussed in the appropriate forum — the Committee on Relations with the Host Country.

We have taken the steps necessary to resolve the issue that my Russian colleague repeatedly raises, and

we believe that the relevant meeting can proceed. The dialogue among the five nuclear-weapon States is a vital and necessary undertaking. We have constantly and consistently supported it, and it should proceed as soon as possible.

I cannot continue to respond to numerous fraudulent and false allegations against the United States Government. That Russian position of fact versus fiction is something that we have fully addressed, and I hope that all of us can see where the truth lies. I appreciate everyone having to engage and listen to this back and forth, but I would just remind countries in this room, as the United States Government has said before, that one country can cease its illegal hostilities on the territory of another sovereign country, and the war would end. Russia can cease to continue to violate Ukrainian sovereignty, and people will stop dying in Ukraine. I think that that is a reality we all can accept.

The Chair: We have now exhausted the time available for this meeting. I sincerely thank our interpreters for staying a few minutes beyond the allocated time. The next meeting of the First Committee will be held tomorrow morning at 10 a.m. sharp in this conference room. I appeal to all delegations to be punctual to enable us to proceed with our work in a timely manner.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.