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First Committee

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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: I urge all delegations taking the floor to kindly keep in mind the suggested time limit for statements.

Mr. Tammsaar (Estonia): Allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on assuming the chairship of the First Committee at the seventy-eighth session of the General Assembly. I assure you of my delegation's full support and cooperation.

Estonia aligns itself with the statement made on behalf of the European Union (see A/C.1/78/PV.2). In addition, I would like to make some remarks in my national capacity.

This First Committee meeting takes place at a time when the Russian Federation, a permanent member of the Security Council, continues its unprovoked and unjustified war of aggression against Ukraine. Estonia condemns Russia's war against Ukraine in the strongest possible terms. Russia has blatantly violated its commitments under the 1994 Budapest Memorandum to refrain from the use of force against Ukraine's territorial integrity and sovereignty. Russia continues to violate its obligations under the Helsinki Final Act, the Charter of the United Nations and the Statute of the International Atomic Energy Agency. Russia must immediately and unconditionally withdraw all its troops and military equipment from the entire territory

of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders. The voluntary involvement of Belarus and Iran in Russia's aggression against Ukraine should be condemned in the strongest possible terms.

Russian forces have occupied the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant and have turned it into a military base, where officials are being forcefully detained, and their human rights violated. That has a direct negative effect on nuclear security and safety in Ukraine, and it severely undermines European and global security and stability. Russia must immediately withdraw from the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant so that the Ukrainian authorities can resume their sovereign responsibilities without outside pressure and interference. The decision by Russia to place nuclear weapons on the territory of Belarus is an escalatory measure that further demonstrates Russia's complete disregard for international security and stability. The threat of use of nuclear force and Russia's announcement of its readiness to conduct nuclear tests undermine the global nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime. Russia's nuclear blackmail is irresponsible and totally unacceptable for a permanent member of the Security Council and a nuclear-weapon State.

Russia continues to deliberately attack civilians and civilian infrastructure, which is a war crime. Yesterday's missile strike against a café in Hroza killed more than 50 people, and it is a barbaric attempt by Russia to subjugate the will of the Ukrainian people defending their own country. With winter around the corner, there are signs that Russia is once again ramping up its shelling of Ukrainian civilian infrastructure,

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including grain facilities and energy infrastructure. Those war crimes are often committed through the use of drones provided by Iran. I want to repeat once again that a United Nations investigation and a report on the issue presented before the Security Council are highly needed.

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) remains the cornerstone of the global regime for nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and peaceful uses of nuclear energy. Estonia deeply regrets that, due to Russia's opposition, the tenth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons could not reach a consensus on an outcome document and the first session of the Preparatory Committee of the Review Conference was unable to adopt a consensus-based report. Estonia shares the ultimate goal of a world without nuclear weapons and continues to advocate for a progressive approach pursued in a realistic and responsible way.

Taking into account the rapid and extensive build-up of China's nuclear arsenal, Estonia calls on China to join future arms control agreements and to immediately take measures to improve transparency on its nuclear weapons and doctrine, to refrain from further build-up and to pursue risk-reduction measures. Estonia supports all international efforts towards the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and urges all States, particularly annex 2 States, to sign and ratify the Treaty without further delay. The latest reports of Russia possibly revoking its ratification of the CTBT are alarming. It would be an irresponsible step undermining our collective efforts. We also support starting negotiations on fissile material cut-off treaty and call on all nuclear-weapon States to declare or maintain moratoriums on the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices.

Iran's continued actions inconsistent with the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) have severe and irreversible proliferation implications. We urge Iran to reverse its alarming nuclear trajectory, return to its commitments in the area of nuclear non-proliferation and resume the implementation of all JCPOA-related monitoring and verification measures. Iran must immediately start effectively engaging with the International Atomic Energy Agency to resolve all pending safeguards issues in accordance with its legally

binding obligations under its NPT Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement.

The nuclear and ballistic-missile programmes of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea continue to threaten international and regional peace and security and are a matter of grave concern. Estonia strongly condemns that country's continued development of its nuclear and ballistic-missile programmes and calls on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to refrain from conducting another nuclear test. We urge the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to comply with Security Council resolutions and abandon all its nuclear weapons, other weapons of mass destruction and ballistic-missile programmes in a complete, verifiable and irreversible manner.

The ninth Review Conference of the States Parties to the Biological Weapons Convention and the fifth Review Conference of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention served to uphold the comprehensive legal prohibitions of those categories of weapons of mass destruction and ensure that there can be no impunity for those who use them. The use of those weapons anywhere, at any time, by anyone and under any circumstances is not acceptable and poses a threat to international peace and security.

The growing frequency of sophisticated malicious cyberincidents shows how cyberspace is increasingly being used to challenge our security. We have seen how Russia uses cybertools to advance its illegal and unprovoked military aggression against Ukraine. Recent large-scale cyberattacks have targeted the Western Balkan countries, and last year Costa Rica was hit critically by ransomware attacks. In that context, promoting an open, free and secure cyberspace, where existing international law, including human rights law and international humanitarian law, fully applies, remains our priority. We find negotiating a new treaty on State behaviour in cyberspace to be premature and resource-heavy. Instead, our focus should turn more strongly to the practical implementation of the agreed framework of responsible State behaviour in cyberspace. That is why Estonia supports the establishment of an inclusive and action-oriented programme of action. We view such a programme of action as a single permanent structure for elaborating further on the framework of responsible State behaviour after the current term of the open-ended working group comes to an end in 2025.

In conclusion, Estonia is determined to contribute to global efforts to strengthen international law

and multilateralism, with the United Nations at its core, including through the implementation of existing disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation instruments.

Mr. Ganou (Burkina Faso) (*spoke in French*): My delegation would first like to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as Chair of the First Committee. Our congratulations also go to the other members of the Bureau. And I want to assure you of my delegation's support and full cooperation in the success of our work.

Burkina Faso aligns itself with the statements made by the representatives of Indonesia and Nigeria on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/78/PV.2) and the Group of African States (see A/C.1/78/PV.3), respectively, and would like to add the following statement in its national capacity.

The current international security situation is very worrisome. The proliferation of nuclear weapons, the threat of terrorism and the growing militarization of outer space are all serious threats to our collective security. The only way to address such threats is to advance true disarmament. We therefore echo the sentiments of the countless nations that have called for a world free of the threat of nuclear weapons. Burkina Faso reiterates its firm commitment to the objectives of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). We encourage all States to adhere to them and to work for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons, and we call urgently for the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and the universalization of the NPT. Burkina Faso is fully committed to the constructive implementation of the TPNW with a view to ultimately achieving a world free of nuclear weapons, in preparation for the second Meeting of States Parties, to be held in New York from 27 November to 1 December.

My delegation also welcomes the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones, one of which is in Africa, created through the Treaty of Pelindaba. They should be supported and extended. With regard to other weapons of mass destruction, my delegation calls for the universalization of the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological Weapons Convention. The universalization of the Oslo Convention on Cluster Munitions and the Ottawa Convention also remains essential, in view of the many damaging consequences of the use of cluster munitions and anti-personnel mines.

Burkina Faso remains deeply concerned about the illicit trade, stockpiling and inappropriate use of small arms and light weapons, which fuel conflicts and instability in many regions, including our own subregion of the central Sahel. The proof of that is the situation in my country and many others in the Sahel, which do not produce weapons but where armed terrorist groups have no lack of weapons or ammunition. My country, which was once a haven of peace, has been dealing with indiscriminate terrorist attacks since 2015. When we can be sure that there are thousands of terrorists who are well equipped with both light weapons and collective weapons, we have to ask where those weapons are coming from.

At the same time, we must guarantee the right to self-defence and the right to possess weapons to that end, as is recognized in the Charter of the United Nations. All disarmament efforts should strike a balance between States' legitimate needs for their defence and the goal of limiting the numbers of weapons in circulation. Combating the trade in small arms and light weapons should be based on a serious willingness on the part of the entire international community to regulate the trade in such weapons. My delegation therefore welcomed the holding in Geneva in August of the ninth Conference of States Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty. With regard to conventional weapons, we believe that special attention should be paid to autonomous weapons systems so as to better understand the potential issues that could be caused by emerging technologies in the area of lethal weapons before we authorize their use or proliferation.

Burkina Faso recognizes that nuclear power can be a clean and reliable source of electricity, which promotes sustainable development and can contribute to meeting the increasing global demand for energy. My country therefore supports the right of States to use nuclear technology for peaceful purposes, in accordance with their international obligations. That requires ensuring full respect for International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards and the highest standards of safety, security and non-proliferation.

Multilateralism remains at the heart of any significant progress towards nuclear disarmament. We commend the efforts of international forums, such as the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization, that are working to find consensus-based solutions to nuclear challenges.

Burkina Faso supports initiatives that promote dialogue, confidence-building and cooperation among States, which are the cornerstones of a safer world. We need greater international cooperation to combat the flows of illicit weapons that destabilize communities and result in innocent victims. The Government of Burkina Faso is deeply concerned about the fate of the victims of armed conflicts. The international community has a moral obligation to provide them with appropriate assistance. That is why Burkina Faso would like to encourage the international community to increase its efforts in working alongside the countries of the Sahel, including Burkina Faso, in order to protect our populations against various kinds of trafficking and cross-border crime and terrorism, as well as assisting victims.

In conclusion, Burkina Faso reiterates the need for an inclusive dialogue in good faith, aimed at making progress in the area of disarmament while ensuring the responsible management of weapons. We must use the power of diplomacy, cooperation and shared responsibility to build a future of peace and prosperity for all.

Mr. Hashmi (Pakistan): On behalf of the Pakistani delegation, I would like to congratulate you, Mr. Chair, and the other members of the Bureau on your election and to assure you of our full cooperation and support.

We align ourselves with the statement made by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/78/PV.2).

The global security landscape presents a grim picture. It is evident in rising geopolitical tensions and great-Power rivalry, the festering of old conflicts and the emergence of new ones owing to a failure to uphold the principles of the Charter of the United Nations. New military blocs have taken shape. There have been unprecedented increases in military expenditures. A growing arms race is under way, building, modernizing, integrating and deploying new types of weapons and platforms on land, at sea and in outer space and cyberspace. In some regions, those developments are fostering asymmetries and undermining strategic stability. Doctrines and strategies for fighting conventional wars continue to be rolled out, regardless of the risk of nuclear escalation. The principles, norms and rules underpinning the Charter and the global arms-control architecture are often sacrificed to strategic and commercial considerations. The largest nuclear Powers have failed to comply with their nuclear disarmament obligations. Cumulatively, those developments have led to a continuing stalemate in the machinery of

disarmament and a breakdown of the international consensus on reducing, controlling and preventing the spread of nuclear arms.

Amid that worrisome drift, the Secretary-General's attempt to outline a New Agenda for Peace is a bold and perhaps timely initiative. Let me highlight some of the key principles that should form the foundations of a durable and equitable international peace and security architecture.

The first is the universal and consistent application of the principles of the Charter, the resolutions of the Security Council and international law, especially a recommitment to the principles of the non-use of force and the peaceful resolution of disputes.

The second is the implementation of the assurance in the final document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (resolution S-10/2) that every State has an equal right to security.

The third is States' faithful compliance with and fulfilment of their arms-control and disarmament obligations.

The fourth is a reinvigoration of conventional arms control at the regional and subregional levels, including the establishment of zones of peace under the auspices of the United Nations.

The fifth is a rejection of double standards in pursuit of non-discriminatory measures in the nuclear and other realms.

The sixth is creating guard rails and developing a normative framework on the use of new technologies for military purposes, while ensuring their access for peaceful purposes without discrimination.

The seventh is strengthening cooperative and inclusive multilateralism in the pursuit of collective security and prioritizing the United Nations machinery over strategic alliances based on the interests of a few.

Many of the negative security-related developments are evident in South Asia. These pose a grave threat to peace and security in the region and beyond. The largest State in the region continues to deprive the people of Jammu and Kashmir of the right to self-determination, in defiance of a dozen Security Council resolutions. That State is also threatening strategic stability, as it continues to receive abundant supply of conventional and non-conventional weaponry, and now new sensitive technologies and platforms. Those generous supplies

and its designation as a net security provider have emboldened that State to impose its hegemony and to pursue the well-advertised ambition to emerge as a dominant Power in South Asia, the Indian Ocean and beyond. Meanwhile, that State continues to pursue belligerent policies, aggressive war-fighting doctrines and heightened readiness postures and deployments, fraught with demonstrated risks of accidental launches.

Pakistan cannot remain oblivious to these evolving security dynamics in our immediate neighbourhood and to the clear and present dangers to our security due to those policies, actions and developments. Pakistan will maintain its capability of minimum credible deterrence against all forms of aggression. Despite continuing provocations and threats, Pakistan remains committed to the goal of a peaceful and stable South Asia. Over the past quarter century, Pakistan proposed a number of initiatives to promote peace and security and prevent the emergence of nuclear weapons in South Asia. Following the nuclear test in the region, Pakistan proposed the establishment of a strategic restraint regime premised on the three interlocking and mutually reinforcing elements of conflict resolution — nuclear and missile restraint and conventional arms balance. The proposal remains on the table.

Pakistan's security policy continues to be defined by restraint and responsibility and avoidance of a mutually debilitating arms race in our region. Pakistan desires and is determined to pursue peace, development and strategic stability in South Asia based on sovereign equality and mutual respect. Such a peace can be built, first, through the resumption of negotiations to resolve the outstanding disputes between Pakistan and India, especially the resolution of the Jammu and Kashmir dispute, in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions and the wishes of the Kashmiri people. It can also be promoted by the maintenance of a balance of conventional and strategic military capabilities and deployments, including reciprocal measures for nuclear, missile and military restraints between the two countries.

Pakistan continues to advocate for the revival of international consensus on arms control and disarmament measures to promote universal and equal security for all States through the promotion of regional and global arms control and disarmament, including nuclear disarmament, based on the declaration and programme of action of the special

session on disarmament and demonstrable adherence to international law.

In that endeavour, Pakistan will continue to support the commencement, without further delay, of negotiations on a comprehensive nuclear weapons convention. Pakistan also supports the immediate start of negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament (CD) on a legally binding negative security assurances and a treaty on prohibition of the placement of weapons in outer space. We presented a detailed working paper early this year on a legally binding instrument on negative security assurances at the Conference on Disarmament.

The proposal for a treaty banning only the production of fissile materials remains flawed in its conception and intended impact. Such a treaty seeks to perpetuate existing asymmetries by excluding from its scope several metric tons of existing fissile material stocks that can produce thousands of new nuclear weapons. Pakistan has therefore made a concrete proposal in the CD on a fissile materials treaty that genuinely promotes the twin objectives of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation equitably. Continued insistence on the flawed and failed approaches of the past has not worked and will not work. We reaffirm the need for revisiting such approaches by adhering faithfully to the universally agreed principles that the adoption of disarmament measures should take place in an equitable and balanced manner so as to ensure the right of each State to security and to ensure that no individual State or group of States obtain advantages over others at any stage.

Pakistan will once again submit its four resolutions in this Committee to address regional and conventional arms control and disarmament and the provision of negative security assurances to non-nuclear weapon States.

Mr. Al-Fatlawi (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, Iraq's delegation would like to sincerely congratulate you, Mr. Chair, on assuming the chairmanship of the First Committee during its seventy-eighth session. I also congratulate the other members of the Bureau. We pledge our full support to you and your team to ensure the success of the work during this year's session.

Iraq aligns itself with the statements delivered by the representatives of Indonesia, on behalf of the

Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, and Jordan, on behalf of the Group of Arab States (see A/C.1/78/PV.2).

The international security environment is currently witnessing increased nuclear risks, heightened tensions and conflicts, along with growing military expenditures. At the same time, international efforts aimed at total disarmament have regressed, and we have failed to make tangible progress in the field of nuclear weapons and to universalize the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). Iraq therefore reiterates its deep concerns about the continued development and production of nuclear weapons, which have grown to nearly 13,000 nuclear warheads — a serious threat for the entire world. That is happening against a backdrop of two failed NPT Review Conferences, in 2015 and 2020. That means that all of us must take urgent concrete and collective measures to bolster regional and international peace and security and pursue the goal of complete disarmament through the following actions.

First, all parties must work diligently to universalize treaties and conventions related to disarmament, particularly those pertaining to nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. They must fully commit to the implementation of article VI of the NPT by nuclear-weapon States, which continue to develop new types of nuclear weapons and have maintained the role of such weapons in their security and military doctrines. Nuclear-weapon States must fulfil their obligations under the 1995, 2000 and 2010 Review Conferences.

Secondly, negotiations to reach a legally binding and non-discriminatory international instrument must begin immediately in order to prevent the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons, particularly against non-nuclear State parties to the NPT. That would respond to the legitimate security concerns of those States and would build mutual confidence among the nuclear States.

Thirdly, negotiations must begin at the Conference on Disarmament, with a view to concluding a verifiable international treaty to ban the production and stockpiling of fissile material. That could serve as a tool for achieving nuclear disarmament.

Fourthly, negotiations should take place at the Conference on Disarmament on a comprehensive treaty related to nuclear weapons that would establish a timeline for the total elimination of nuclear weapons, within the framework of an effective international

verification system, and we need multilateral efforts to ensure the universality of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) through its ratification by the remaining eight annex 2 States. The Treaty's entry into force will positively affect the course and results of multilateral international efforts in this field.

Fifthly, nuclear disarmament must remain a top priority of the international community until it achieves the ultimate goal — the complete elimination of nuclear weapons, including their use or threat of use under any circumstance or pretext.

Nuclear-weapon-free zones are positive steps and important measures to promote global nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. Iraq therefore once again warns of the negative impacts on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation that the non-implementation of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East would have, which would undermine the Treaty and its universal nature. We call for the expeditious establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, in accordance with paragraph 14 of Security Council resolution 687 (1991) and relevant General Assembly resolutions, as well as the 1995 NPT Review Conference resolution contained in the annex to document NPT/CONF.1995/32 (Part I) and the outcome document of the 2010 NPT Review Conference.

Iraq welcomes the success achieved by those members participating in the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction during its past three sessions. The efforts undertaken constitute a parallel track supporting the other tracks aimed at establishing the targeted zone. However, it is not an alternative to the 1995 Middle East resolution or the outcome documents of the 2000 and 2010 NPT Review Conferences. In that context, Iraq calls on all parties to continue their efforts so that the fourth session of the conference, which will take place in November under the presidency of Libya, will be crowned with success and achieve concrete results in that regard.

On a related issue, Iraq believes that we cannot implement the 1995 Middle East resolution without the Israeli entity joining the NPT as a non-nuclear party. Moreover, Israel should put all of its nuclear installations under the comprehensive safeguards system of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Iraq welcomes the adoption by consensus of the second annual report of the Open-ended Working

Group on Security of and in the Use of Information and Communications Technologies 2021–2025, established by resolution 75/240 of 2020, and expresses its full support for the group. It is undertaking efforts to ensure the success of upcoming sessions and to adopt recommendations to support developing countries in addressing risks and challenges stemming from the use of information and communications technologies, as well as growing threats in that regard.

Iraq welcomes the adoption by the open-ended working group established pursuant to resolution 76/233 of its final report (see A/78/111), which recommends that the Assembly adopt the Global Framework for Through-life Conventional Ammunition Management with a view to managing conventional ammunition in a voluntary, independent and comprehensive manner. We stress the need to fill the technological gap among developing and developed countries to address the challenges of new technology in the field of conventional ammunition and to limit the adverse effects and existing gaps among various countries.

Mr. Nena (Lesotho): Allow me to begin by congratulating you, Mr. Chair, and other members of the Bureau on your election as Chair of the First Committee. We are confident that your experience, talent and energy will ensure a successful outcome for the work of the Committee.

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

We are living in uncertain times during which the need to secure the global community has never been greater. The situation warrants the universal objective of maintaining international peace and security and ridding the world of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, as is the *raison d'être* for the formation of the United Nations.

Sadly, the ever-increasing threat of the use of weapons of mass destruction continues to shatter our hopes for a peaceful world. That is so despite the fact that, over the years, the General Assembly has adopted numerous resolutions on the issue of arms control and disarmament, including small arms and light weapons. In the same vein, we are concerned that nuclear, chemical and biological weapons continue to pose a threat to global peace and security. The eroding

international environment has had major implications for global arms control and disarmament architecture.

In recent times, the state of global peace and security has gradually gotten worse, with recurring conflicts and the eruption of new ones in many parts of the world. Coupled with that, the emergence of new extremist groups and terrorist entities has not only compounded the problem but also been a stark reminder that we must act collectively to discharge the moral responsibility resting on us to ensure that every human race across the globe enjoys the right to peace and security and the sanctity of life.

The international community demonstrated a collective resolve by overwhelmingly adopting the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) in April 2013 and witnessed its entry into force the following year. However, conventional weapons continue to bring untold sorrow to us in the developing world. It is therefore our considered view that a fair and balanced, yet robust, implementation of the ATT is critical in order to achieve its goals in regulating international trade in conventional arms and in contributing towards curbing their illicit transfer.

The world has long come to terms with the dangers facing humankind posed by the possession of weapons of mass destruction. For that reason, Lesotho will continue to advocate total destruction and elimination of all nuclear weapons. Those weapons have no place in modern-day civilization.

The disarmament and international security landscape saw some progress with the entry into force of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) in 2021. However, there is still more that needs to be done, in particular by nuclear-weapon States, in the area of nuclear disarmament.

That situation is further exacerbated by the existing stockpile of nuclear weapons, as well as the modernization of such weapons, which casts a shadow of doubt on our prospects for attaining a nuclear-weapon-free world in the immediate future. Those developments raise concerns that the risk of nuclear use is increasing and the legal obligations for non-proliferation and disarmament are being undermined. The state of affairs surely calls for action on our part as Member States.

We wish to underscore that Lesotho is strongly committed to the TPNW and will continue to support the principle of complete nuclear disarmament, as the

utmost prerequisite for maintaining international peace and security.

The possession of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction remains the principal threat to the survival of humankind. Sadly, discord remains among us, Member States, on how to overcome those problems. The time has come for the international community to demonstrate resolve and commitment to ensure the issue of arms control and disarmament is dealt with on a multilateral basis in order to secure global peace and security.

In recent years, new dimensions have become increasingly important in international security, those include terrorism, illegal arms, human and drug trafficking. The United Nations has had to grapple with crisis situations in many parts of the world in pursuance of its mandate to maintain international peace and security. Therefore, there is a need to demonstrate the importance of multilateralism as a major facet of international relations.

We wish to express our concern and disappointment that the parties at the tenth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), held in New York in August 2022, failed to reach consensus on the final outcome document. It was our hope that the Conference would provide the opportunity for all Member States to build consensus and work in earnest to achieve the objectives of the NPT.

In conclusion, Lesotho wishes to reiterate its support for all United Nations resolutions on arms control and disarmament, and in particular on the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones across the world, which are aimed at achieving nuclear disarmament objectives and thereby promoting and strengthening regional and global peace and security. It is in that spirit that we wish to reaffirm our country's commitment to the Treaty of Pelindaba which paved the way for the African continent to be a nuclear-weapon-free zone.

Finally, I wish to take this opportunity to call on the entire international community to join hands in bridging the gulf between rhetoric and action and fast track the implementation of the NPT. It is in that spirit that we reiterate our call to nuclear-weapon States to sign and ratify TPNW to ensure that humankind lives in peace without fear of extinction.

Mr. Dang Hoang Giang (Viet Nam): Viet Nam aligns itself with the statements delivered by the

representatives of Indonesia, on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/78/PV.2), and the Philippines, on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) (see A/C.1/78/PV.2).

The global expectations for progress in the field of disarmament have not had substantive results. We are still facing difficulties in reaching a consensus on the core issues of nuclear disarmament and the non-proliferation negotiating agenda. Global military spending has hit a new record high, rising by 3.7 per cent last year. The danger of weapons of mass destruction illegally falling into the hands of terrorists is more worrisome than ever. To deal with those challenges, the international community must redouble its efforts to promote the cause of general and complete disarmament.

As a country that endured decades of wars with enormous losses and suffering, Viet Nam maintains a principled policy of supporting international efforts towards general and complete disarmament. Nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation should continue to be our top priority. It will be crucial to advance action in a balanced manner on all three pillars of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) — nuclear non-proliferation, disarmament and the peaceful use of nuclear energy — in order to safeguard the world from the potential devastation of nuclear weapons. We highly appreciated the efforts of Member States in convening meetings in the past few months of the Working Group on further strengthening the review process of the Treaty and of the NPT Preparatory Committee, with a view to strengthening the NPT review process.

The NPT should be complemented by other crucial legally binding instruments, including the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). In that connection, Viet Nam calls for the speedy entry into force of the CTBT, which needs the remaining States listed in its annex 2 to sign and ratify it. We are also looking forward to the successful convening of the second Meeting of States Parties to the TPNW, to be held in December. Viet Nam firmly believes that nuclear-weapon-free zones and negative security assurances represent important contributions to the goal of achieving nuclear disarmament and general and complete disarmament. In that regard, Viet Nam and other members of ASEAN once again reaffirm their commitment to preserving South-East Asia as a zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of

mass destruction. We welcome any individual nuclear-weapon State willing to sign and ratify the Protocol to the Treaty on the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone without reservations.

Beyond disarmament and arms control related to weapons of mass destruction, we have seen issues related to conventional weapons addressed with great attention and balance. We welcomed the conclusion of the Open-ended Working Group on Conventional Ammunition and take note of the adoption of its outcome document (see A/78/111), which contains a set of political commitments for a new voluntary global framework that will address existing gaps in through-life ammunition management.

My delegation also welcomed member States' recent adoption by consensus of the recommendations of the United Nations Disarmament Commission for promoting the practical implementation of transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities, with the goal of preventing an arms race in outer space. We support ensuring the peaceful use of outer space and emphasize that the Charter of the United Nations and international law should govern all activities in its exploration and use. In that process, the right of every State and people to freely access such spaces must be guaranteed, taking into account the views of all Member States and the corresponding complexity of those areas.

While weapons do not of themselves cause war, arms races and non-transparency create mistrust and tension among countries. To effectively rebuild trust and ease tensions, every country, big or small, should uphold the fundamental principles of international law and the Charter, including respect for national sovereignty and territorial integrity, the peaceful settlement of disputes and refraining from the use or threat of use of force. In multilateral negotiations on disarmament, we should also emphasize the importance of political will, confidence-building and transparency in addressing international disarmament and security issues. In that spirit, Viet Nam has consistently supported all initiatives and efforts aimed at consolidating the international instruments of disarmament and arms control, as well as non-proliferation regimes, thereby contributing to international and regional peace and security. We have acceded to all the major multilateral treaties on prohibiting weapons of mass destruction and have been an active member of many United Nations disarmament bodies.

The future we want depends on the efforts we are making today. With that in mind, we must work together in a spirit of multilateralism to build a safe and peaceful world for humankind. Viet Nam stands ready to engage constructively in the work of the First Committee under your leadership, Mr. Chair, in order to promote international peace, security and development.

Mr. Ray (India): India congratulates you, Mr. Chair, and would like to assure you of our full support and cooperation.

The deliberations of the First Committee have continued to take place in challenging global circumstances, making this a time for all of us to walk together. India attaches high importance to the Conference on Disarmament (CD) and will be the first among the six Presidents of the CD next year. We are also pleased to note that the United Nations Disarmament Commission, the main deliberative body within the United Nations on disarmament issues, has been able to agree on consensus recommendations on trust- and confidence-building measures in outer space.

India will submit four well-known draft resolutions to the First Committee. They are draft resolutions A/C.1/78/L.34, entitled "Convention on the Prohibition of the Use of Nuclear Weapons", A/C.1/78/L.37, entitled "Reducing nuclear danger", A/C.1/78/L.36, entitled "Measures to prevent terrorists from acquiring weapons of mass destruction", and A/C.1/78/L.35, entitled "Role of science and technology in the context of international security and disarmament". The draft resolutions have consistently highlighted crucial issues pertaining to disarmament and international security and have enjoyed wide support among the United Nations membership, which we hope will continue.

India remains firmly committed to the goal of universal, non-discriminatory and verifiable nuclear disarmament. We have called for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons through a step-by-step process, as outlined in our working paper on nuclear disarmament submitted to the CD in 2007 and contained in document CD/1816. As a responsible nuclear-weapon State, India is committed, in accordance with its nuclear doctrine, to maintaining credible minimum deterrence with a posture of no-first use and non-use against non-nuclear weapon States. Without diminishing the priority that we attach to nuclear disarmament, India supports the immediate commencement of negotiations in the CD of a fissile material cut-off treaty, on the basis of CD/1299 and the mandate it contains. We share the widely felt

disappointment that the negotiations continue to remain blocked, despite substantial support. An Indian expert participated constructively in the work of the recently concluded Group of Governmental Experts to Further Consider Nuclear Disarmament Verification Issues, and we are happy to note that the Group was able to agree on a consensus report (see A/78/120).

As a major spacefaring nation, India has vital development and security interests in space. An Indian spacecraft landed on the moon recently and an Indian rover explored the moon's south pole. India believes that outer space belongs to all of us. We are one Earth and one family and have one future. We believe that outer space should be an arena for cooperation, not conflict. India supports negotiating a legally binding instrument on the prevention of an arms race in outer space in the CD.

India welcomes the decision of the ninth Review Conference of the Biological Weapons Convention to establish an intersessional programme, as well as its decision to develop and to foster international cooperation, with a view to establishing mechanisms for reviewing science and technology developments. We hope that the Working Group on the Strengthening of the Biological Weapons Convention will succeed in recommending measures, particularly on verification and compliance, to reinforce the objectives of the Convention. The fifth Review Conference of the Chemical Weapons Convention, although it could not produce a consensus outcome document, succeeded in undertaking a comprehensive review of the Convention. We urge States parties to work together to take forward the work that consensus was achieved on during the Review Conference, including the adaptation of the verification and inspection regime and improving geographical representation and external engagement, among other areas.

India has participated and will continue to participate actively in the work of the Group of Governmental Experts on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems and believes that those deliberations should continue within the framework of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons. We note that the Group has achieved significant understandings over the course of its work. Evolving technologies should not be stigmatized. My delegation believes that public opinion prefers an approach that takes into account the potential positive impact of such technologies and their evolution.

The illicit transfer of conventional weapons, including small arms and light weapons, particularly to terrorists and non-State actors, is an area of grave concern for India. India welcomed the consensus adoption of the final report of the eighth Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects (A/CONF.192/BMS/2022/1), which recognized the adverse effects of the illicit arms trade in exacerbating terrorism, and we emphasize the role of United Nations instruments, including the Programme of Action, in addressing the threat posed by terrorism. India contributed actively to the discussions of the Open-ended Working Group on Conventional Ammunition.

India is committed to promoting an open, secure, stable, accessible and peaceful information and communications technologies environment. Cyberspace is facing an increasing number of challenges in the form of threats and misuse for criminal and terrorist purposes. Recognizing the disparity in Member States' preparedness to tackle various cyber threats and the need to enhance their capabilities, India has proposed the development of a global cybersecurity cooperation portal anchored at the United Nations, as a global platform for international cooperation and coordination among Member States on the security of cyber infrastructure and improving cyber capabilities.

India hosts a fully funded annual disarmament and international security fellowship programme for advancing disarmament education. The third edition of the fellowship was held earlier this year in India. Young diplomats from 30 countries attended the course.

In the interests of saving time, the complete version of my statement will be uploaded online. Before I conclude, I would like to take this opportunity to refer to the statement made by my colleague from Pakistan and the reference he made to the union territory of Jammu and Kashmir. I will restrict myself to saying that the union territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh are and will remain a part of India. We wish the people of Pakistan well. They have suffered from a combination of natural and human-made problems in the recent past and deserve better. My delegation will not discuss the matter further.

Mrs. Nipomici (Republic of Moldova): At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Mr. Chair, and your fellow Bureau members on your leadership of the

First Committee, and to assure you of my delegation's full support.

The Republic of Moldova 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 our national capacity.

The year 2023 has been marked by continued geopolitical tensions and an arms race, which are undermining international peace and security. The European continent is no exception in that regard. For a second consecutive year, Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine has challenged the sovereignty and territorial integrity of an independent State and shattered Europe's security. We reiterate our strong condemnation of the Russian Federation's ongoing military aggression and reaffirm our unwavering commitment to the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders.

As a neighbour of Ukraine, we find ourselves countering hybrid threats to our security and stability every day. We are working on strengthening our resilience, including by improving our response to cyber attacks and disinformation campaigns. We have managed to preserve peace across the country, including in the Transnistrian region, where Russian troops are illegally stationed and where concerns about human rights violations are deeply worrisome. Our commitment to a peaceful resolution of the issue remains steadfast. An arrangement that could be conducive to achieving those goals would be the demilitarization of the region, including the complete, unconditional and immediate withdrawal of the Russian Federation troops illegally stationed on the territory of the Republic of Moldova and the evacuation and destruction of the ammunition stocks in the warehouse in Cobasna.

Against a backdrop of a persistently fragile international security environment, it is vital that we recommit to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and international law. Full adherence to the existing normative framework regulating arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation is imperative. We want to highlight the critical need to walk back from nuclear rhetoric and to pursue the disarmament-related goals set in the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). Ensuring full compliance with the NPT's provisions and the universalization of the Treaty is fundamental to achieving nuclear non-proliferation. We have taken

note of the first session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2026 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons as what is hopefully an initial step towards a successful forthcoming Review Conference.

The Republic of Moldova supports the calls for the universalization and universal ratification and entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), which has been instrumental in creating a global normative framework for containing and reducing nuclear threats. We deplore the continued failure of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to comply with the provisions of the CTBT and urge the country to abandon all nuclear weapons and existing nuclear programmes and to take concrete action towards achieving the complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization of its nuclear-weapon-related programme. In the same vein, we highlight the importance of the multilateral instruments against chemical and biological weapons as critical pillars for upholding international peace and security. The coronavirus disease pandemic has emphasized the devastating impact that biological hazards, whether natural or deliberate, can have on people and their lives. In that regard, we welcomed the outcome of the ninth Review Conference of the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC), to which the Republic of Moldova contributed. The important decisions adopted at the Review Conference will advance the implementation of the BWC.

Diverted or poorly managed munitions fuel crime, terrorism, armed violence, gender-based violence and instability. Accordingly, the Republic of Moldova continues to support the conventional arms-control instruments, as well as multilateral export-control regimes. We attach great importance to the effective implementation of the conventional-arms-control instruments, including the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction and the Convention on Cluster Munitions. Their rules and obligations must be respected and their guidelines followed.

It is especially imperative to reduce the unregulated availability of conventional arms and small arms and light weapons in areas of conflict or potential conflict by ensuring the strict transfer, control and safe destruction of surplus weapons, as well as by helping the Governments affected to deal with all aspects of those problems. From that perspective, the universalization

and full implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty, as well as other complementary instruments such as the International Tracing Instrument, the Firearms Protocol and the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, would prevent conventional weapons from being used to threaten security, destabilize States or exacerbate conflicts. The Republic of Moldova welcomed the adoption on 9 June of the Global Framework for Through-life Ammunition Management (see A/78/111), containing a set of voluntary political commitments that supports safe, secure and sustainable through-life ammunition management at the global level.

Last but not least, gender equality and women's empowerment remain a horizontal priority of the Republic of Moldova. Integrating the gender dimension into disarmament discussions is an important step in promoting peace and security.

In conclusion, I would like to reaffirm my country's commitment to supporting the work of this important Committee in further advancing the disarmament and non-proliferation agenda.

Mr. Vorshilov (Mongolia): Let me start by congratulating you, Mr. Chair, and the other members of the Bureau on your assumption of the chairmanship of the First Committee, and by wishing you and your team every success in guiding the endeavours of this important Committee to a productive outcome, especially in these trying times. You can count on Mongolia's full support and cooperation.

Mongolia aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/78/PV.2).

In the increasingly tense and strained geopolitical situation in which our world finds itself today, the urgency and immediacy of the need to further advance our common objective of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation is a pressing matter. The failure of the States parties to adopt a consensual outcome document at the tenth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) in 2022 was regrettable. The final document is crucial in contributing to the full implementation of the NPT, and in that regard we remain hopeful that States parties will not abandon their efforts to work together towards realizing our common goal of achieving the total elimination of nuclear weapons. We maintain that the

NPT is the cornerstone of the nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament regime. We call upon the remaining States to take concrete steps towards accomplishing our common objective to end nuclear proliferation and to establish a world without nuclear weapons.

We remain hopeful that the States parties will substantially advance their efforts and commitments in reaching the objectives of the Treaty's three mutually reinforcing pillars — namely, nuclear non-proliferation, disarmament and the right to the peaceful use of nuclear energy. To that end, I would like to reaffirm Mongolia's full commitment to nuclear disarmament and the maintenance of international peace and security. We will continue to provide unwavering support for the implementation of the NPT, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, the Chemical Weapons Convention, the Biological Weapons Convention and the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). The TPNW is crucial to achieving the objectives of the total elimination of nuclear weapons. The Treaty's entry into force in January 2021 marked a milestone in international efforts to ban such weapons. In that regard, we welcome the adoption, by consensus, of a declaration and a practical action plan at the first Meeting of the States Parties to the TPNW, which was held in Vienna in June 2022. We are confident that those documents will further enhance the implementation of the Treaty's objective of achieving the total elimination of nuclear weapons. We look forward to fruitful deliberations at the upcoming second Meeting of the States Parties commencing in November 2023.

It has been more than three decades since Mongolia declared its territory a nuclear-weapon-free zone, as we continue to relentlessly support the international community's efforts towards disarmament and the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. In that context, the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones is an integral instrument for total global nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. Our earnest efforts to contribute to regional peace and security have also been steadily growing, as we successfully hosted the international conference of the Ulaanbaatar Dialogue on Northeast Asian Security in June 2023 for the eighth consecutive year. The Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Mrs. Izumi Nakamitsu, who participated in that conference, highlighted that the Ulaanbaatar Dialogue mechanism is becoming a significant platform in establishing peace and security and in strengthening confidence-building measures in Northeast Asia.

Finally, allow me to reiterate Mongolia's commitment to collaborating with all Member States to accomplish our shared objectives. We trust that the Committee will exhibit the required determination to tackle crucial matters on its agenda.

Mr. White (Ireland): Ireland aligns itself with the statements made on behalf of the European Union and the New Agenda Coalition.

I congratulate you, Sir, on assuming the chair, assure you of Ireland's full support and encourage you to facilitate civil society participation.

Our meeting is overshadowed by Russia's ongoing illegal invasion of Ukraine. Appalling crimes and human rights violations continue unabated. There must be accountability. Ireland reiterates its condemnation in the strongest possible terms of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, and we unequivocally condemn Russia's nuclear threats. Any use of nuclear weapons would result in devastating humanitarian consequences. We remain seriously concerned by the impact of Russia's illegal invasion on nuclear safety and security in Ukraine, and we fully support the efforts of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Russia's illegal seizure and occupation of the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant has created unacceptable risks. The power plant must be returned to full and exclusive Ukrainian control.

Ireland calls on Russia to resume the full implementation of its obligations under the New START Treaty. The Treaty's verified reduction of deployed strategic nuclear arsenals contributes to international and European security and to the implementation of article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). Russia's announced deployment of nuclear weapons to Belarus is an additional threat to that security, and we call on Belarus and Russia to immediately reverse that course of action. The NPT is the cornerstone of the disarmament and non-proliferation regime. Despite the NPT working group and Preparatory Committee being recently prevented from delivering consensus outcomes, we are encouraged nonetheless by the growing interest in transparency and accountability in the implementation of article VI commitments. We must build on that momentum.

Ireland looks forward to the second Meeting of States Parties to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) later this year. The TPNW

is fully compatible with, and complementary to, the NPT. It is an effective legal measure contributing to the implementation of the NPT's disarmament provisions. Ireland welcomes the recent thirteenth Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). Ireland calls on all eight remaining annex 2 States to join the CTBT immediately and welcomes the ratifications by non-annex 2 States since the last Conference and encourage continued progress. Testing moratoriums must be maintained pending the CTBT's entry into force.

Ireland reaffirms the importance of universal adherence to IAEA safeguards and the universalization of the additional protocol in order to deliver on non-proliferation. Ireland is deeply concerned by Iran's nuclear activities, which are inconsistent with the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. Iran's actions continue to raise very serious proliferation risks. It is essential that Iran and the international community work urgently to reduce the risk of nuclear proliferation and to de-escalate tensions in the region. We call on Iran to return to full cooperation with the IAEA on monitoring and verification. Iran must also satisfactorily clarify outstanding nuclear safeguards issues with the IAEA. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea's ongoing nuclear rhetoric and nuclear and missile-related activities constitute a serious threat. We call on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to immediately end its destabilizing actions and abandon its missiles, weapons of mass destruction and nuclear programmes in a complete, verifiable and irreversible manner.

Ireland reaffirms its unyielding support for the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BWC). They are essential tools in eliminating those weapons of mass destruction. The year 2023 saw the final destruction of all declared chemical weapons stockpiles — a testament to the transformative impact that multilateralism can achieve. Nevertheless, we regret the re-emergence of chemical weapons use, including in Syria and elsewhere, which is one of the most urgent threats to international peace and security. We must remain vigilant in our pursuit of a world free from chemical weapons and ensure that there can be no impunity for any use of chemical weapons. Ireland reiterates its support for the vital work of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons.

The coronavirus disease pandemic laid bare the alarming pace and scale at which new developments can

threaten our peace and security. We must strengthen our disarmament and non-proliferation instruments so that they can withstand existing threats and are agile enough to protect us from those yet to come. Ireland welcomes the decision at the BWC Review Conference in 2022 to establish a new Working Group on the strengthening of the BWC. Efforts to misrepresent or undermine legitimate biosafety and biosecurity research work are unacceptable and can only weaken efforts to prevent and control future outbreaks.

Similarly, autonomous weapons demand the international community's urgent attention to ensure that we keep step with the rapid pace of developments. Ireland is encouraged by efforts from many countries this year to accelerate and deepen those discussions, including the Austrian-led draft resolution (A/C.1/78/L.56), which Ireland is pleased to co-sponsor. They complement the core work of the Group of Governmental Experts on Emerging Technologies in the Area of Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems and demonstrate the appetite for multilateral solutions to the challenge. Ireland is supportive of the two-tier approach to autonomous weapons systems and reiterates that human beings must make the decisions with regard to the use of lethal force, exert control over the lethal weapons systems that they use and remain accountable for decisions over the use of force in order to ensure compliance with international law, in particular international humanitarian law, and due consideration for ethics.

The Secretary-General has repeatedly called on States to address the civilian suffering caused by explosive weapons in populated areas. Ireland proudly led consultations to agree the Political Declaration on Strengthening the Protection of Civilians from the Humanitarian Consequences Arising from the Use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas and hosted the Declaration endorsement conference in Dublin, in November 2022. Eighty-three States have now endorsed the Declaration and pledged to improve the protection of civilians during armed conflict. We call on all States that have not yet done so to endorse the Declaration. We look forward to supporting the process further at the follow-up conference to be held in Oslo in April 2024.

Ireland has held a strong and unwavering commitment to the Convention on Cluster Munitions since its adoption in Dublin in 2008. Nevertheless, 15 years on, their documented use has continued. Ireland reiterates that cluster munitions are by

nature indiscriminate, and we condemn all use of those prohibited weapons in all circumstances and by any actor. Ireland calls on all those who develop, produce, stockpile or transfer cluster munitions to cease immediately. The use or facilitation of cluster munitions use must never be normalized. Work to universalize and reinforce the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention must also continue to ensure the worldwide elimination of those atrocious weapons, which inflict devastating humanitarian harm and undermine longer-term development. We call on all actors to refrain from using those indiscriminate weapons.

Ireland welcomes the global framework and outcome document resulting from the Open-ended Working Group on Conventional Ammunition and attaches great importance to a meaningful and substantive follow-up process. Ireland is encouraged by the work of the Open-ended Working Group on Reducing Space Threats through Norms, Rules and Principles of Responsible Behaviours, despite a final report being blocked by Russia. That open-ended working group was a valuable exercise, broadening the international community's understanding of the space threat landscape. Ireland looks forward to engaging in the follow-up.

Gender equality and consideration of the gendered impacts of weapons are long-standing priorities for Ireland. Weapons have a disproportionate impact on women and girls. The full, equal and meaningful participation of women and men and the full integration of a gender perspective are intrinsic elements to the work of the First Committee and across disarmament forums.

In conclusion, we face increasing threats to international peace and security from civilian harm in urban conflict and the modernization and expansion of nuclear arsenals, to malicious cyberactivity and challenges to international humanitarian law. The United Nations is central to our multilateral response. Ireland will continue to support all efforts in shouldering our collective responsibility of achieving a peaceful and secure world.

Mr. Ghorbanpour Najafabadi (Islamic Republic of Iran): I would like to congratulate you, Sir, and the other members of the Bureau on your elections.

My delegation associates itself with the statement delivered by representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/78/PV.2).

The current state of international affairs is underscored by the ticking of the Doomsday Clock, driven

not only by modernization efforts and an escalating nuclear arms race, but also by various other factors. Nuclear arsenals are being replaced and upgraded, with countries like the United States increasing their budgets for nuclear weapon programmes, expanding its nuclear stockpile and lowering the threshold for possible nuclear weapon use, further diminishing global peace and security. In addition to the erosion of key nuclear arms control agreements, there is widespread non-compliance with legally binding obligations related to nuclear disarmament, particularly under article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and commitments undertaken at the Review Conferences of the Parties to the Treaty. The international community rightfully expects the nuclear weapon States to be held accountable for their obligations. In the wake of the failures of the 2015 and 2022 NPT Review Conferences, the success of the next Conference will hinge entirely upon the political will of the nuclear weapon States.

The only guaranteed safeguard against their use or threat of use lies in their complete and verifiable elimination, accompanied by legally binding assurances of non-production. Nuclear weapon States must halt all plans to modernize existing nuclear weapons, cease the development of new types of nuclear weapon systems and refrain from constructing new facilities for nuclear weapon production and deployment. They must eliminate nuclear weapons, initiate negotiations for a comprehensive nuclear weapon convention, provide unconditional security assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States and maintain the taboo against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons.

At the regional level, the nuclear weapons possessed by the Israeli regime continue to pose a grave threat to regional and global peace and security. It obstructs the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, an initiative launched by Iran in 1974, and rather continues to threaten others with nuclear annihilation. A vivid example of the regime's outlawed action is its calling for a so-called credible nuclear threat against Iran, which was brazenly raised by the regime's Prime Minister during the general debate on 22 September (see A/78/PV.10). We categorically condemn that illegitimate, illegal and irresponsible action and position. The international community must hold the regime accountable through resolutions and decisions that call on it to abandon its nuclear weapons, accede to the NPT as a non-nuclear weapon party, and subject all its nuclear facilities

and activities to International Atomic Energy Agency comprehensive safeguards.

In relation to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), we strongly advocate for the full and effective implementation of the Convention and are opposed to any use of, or efforts to develop, those weapons. As the greatest victim of the systematic use of chemical weapons, we are pleased with the effective efforts of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons in destroying all declared chemical weapons. The failure of the fifth Review Conference of the States Parties to the CWC, following the setback in the previous Review Conference, is deeply concerning.

With regard to the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC), we urge the United States to not only withdraw its reservation to the 1925 Geneva Protocol, but also refrain from opposing the development of the BWC, especially in response to reports of its involvement in the development of biological weapons. However, we are concerned about the threat posed by the use of those two types of weapons by terrorists, or the Israeli regime, which is not a party to either of the Conventions. We therefore have a similar expectation from the international community to hold that regime accountable so that they accede and implement those two Conventions.

We must not overlook the perils posed by new technologies. As some States are weaponizing outer space and cyberspace, we reiterate our steadfast position on their peaceful use. Legally binding instruments must be established to ensure that they are exclusively used for peaceful purposes. Any attempts to interpret or impose unilateral coercive measures that infringe upon the inalienable rights of States in those domains must be avoided. We express our appreciation to the Secretary-General and the Office for Disarmament Affairs for inviting Iran to be part of the new Group of Governmental Experts on Further Practical Measures for the Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space.

Iran remains fully committed to the implementation of its Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement with the IAEA. The Agency's 2022 safeguards reports attests to Iran's cooperation and the absence of any diversion of nuclear material from peaceful activities or undeclared nuclear production.

Regarding the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), Iran fulfilled its commitments, while the United States unilaterally withdrew from the agreement,

violating resolution 2231 (2015) and imposing sanctions. The European participants in the JCPOA failed to compensate for the United States-imposed losses. Therefore Iran exercised its rights under the JCPOA to take remedial actions. Iran negotiated in good faith for the JCPOA's full implementation but awaits the return to compliance of the United States and the European Union participants in the JCPOA.

We appreciate the fair and balanced stance of some delegations that recognize the mutual commitments of the JCPOA. Regrettably, many Western countries have displayed bias against Iran, calling for unilateral Iranian compliance. That approach, rooted in United States policy, hampers the JCPOA's full restoration. Additionally, these countries must be urged to stop violating their NPT-based obligations, including the prevention of nuclear sharing. Iran stands ready to conclude JCPOA negotiations.

The full version of my statement will be posted shortly on the e-deleGATE portal.

Ms. Camara (Guinea) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, on behalf of my delegation, I would like to add my voice to those of previous delegations and extend my warm congratulations to you, Sir, and the Bureau for your election as Chair of the First Committee.

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

Although disarmament has been a priority goal of the United Nations since its establishment, the arms race and the modernization of nuclear arsenals continue to give rise to tensions and instability that undermine multilateral efforts and cooperation between States in the maintenance of international peace and security. The Republic of Guinea regrets to note that threats to international peace and security are increasing at a worrisome pace. The current global context, characterized by various military manoeuvres, armed conflicts and threats of the use of nuclear weapons, is further evidence of that.

Given these risks of constant global instability, the international community should change its deterrence strategy. It should promote disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation through effective implementation of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty with a

view to ensuring international peace and security. We must take seriously the dismantling and inventorying of stockpiles of weapons of mass destruction, as well as their production, with a view to their systematic elimination. As the Secretary-General said, the only way to prevent the use of nuclear weapons is to eliminate them. In that regard, my delegation wishes to commend the commitment and efforts of Mr. António Guterres. His leadership places the issue of disarmament and conflict prevention at the heart of the New Agenda for Peace, thus shoring up the hope for new opportunities for a world free of nuclear weapons.

From our point of view, no nation in the world can wage nuclear war alone and emerge victorious. We must therefore strengthen multilateralism in order to guarantee the survival of our planet. In recent years, we have witnessed a marked increase in investment in nuclear weapons, which is worrisome to more than one observer of international life. At this stage, the frantic arms race risks endangering the survival of the human species. The funds invested in these weapons of mass destruction could be used to finance the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, in developing countries in general and countries in Africa in particular. In that vein, the Republic of Guinea, concerned with maintaining global peace and stability while respecting its international commitments, has ratified the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and the Treaty of Pelindaba — or African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty. The latter indicates in paragraph 5 of its preamble that the African nuclear-weapon-free zone will constitute an important step towards strengthening the non-proliferation regime, promoting cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, promoting general and complete disarmament and enhancing regional and international peace and security. It should be noted that my country took part in the African regional seminar on the universalization of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, held in Pretoria on 30 and 31 January. That enhances our desire to engage in the process leading to the signature and ratification of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, in accordance with the relevant procedures.

For Africa, in addition to nuclear, bacteriological and chemical threats and other attacks linked to cybercrime, the circulation of small arms and light weapons continues to be a serious concern for the maintenance of peace and security. In a context marked by the intensification of the phenomenon of terrorism and armed conflicts, the uncontrolled circulation of

these weapons is a dangerous threat to the security of the West African subregion. These weapons can easily end up in the hands of armed, terrorist or criminal groups. The Republic of Guinea, for its part, is not immune to the phenomenon of proliferation and illicit circulation of small arms and light weapons. A national commission has been set up to remedy that and has developed a very ambitious and decisive national action plan. With a view to regulating the circulation and illicit trade of small arms and light weapons, my delegation suggests the following: stepping up the fight against traffickers, buyers and the illicit sale of small arms and light weapons; intensifying the fight against corruption linked to the trade and illicit possession of weapons; and strengthening surveillance at land, sea and air borders. To achieve that, significant funding from developed countries is strongly requested.

My delegation would like to draw the Committee's attention to the issue of the emergence of artificial intelligence. While this technological advancement has many benefits in terms of science, particularly in the areas of health, education and infrastructure, it remains a concern in terms of its use to improve the efficiency and precision of nuclear weapons. There is therefore an imminent risk of proliferation, as artificial intelligence could make nuclear weapons more accessible to countries that do not currently possess them. Furthermore, artificial intelligence could also be used to develop autonomous nuclear weapons, which could be launched without human intervention. Indeed, the risk of error is to be feared, since artificial intelligence is a complex technology that is susceptible to errors. A mistake in an autonomous nuclear weapons system could lead to catastrophic consequences.

Given these existential threats, my delegation reiterates its call on nuclear weapon States to respect international law and fully implement the various United Nations resolutions on this subject. In doing so, we must all work together to promote disarmament and the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, in support of international peace and security. In that regard, my delegation proposes a strengthening of existing treaties; the ratification of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons by States that have not yet done so; the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention; the control and reduction of conventional weapons; the development of international standards and regulations on the use of artificial intelligence in nuclear weapons; and the establishment of control and

verification systems to ensure that autonomous nuclear weapons are not used for any reason whatsoever —

The Chair: I ask the representative of Guinea to conclude her statement. The complete version of the statement can be posted on the e-deleGATE portal. I apologize for the inconvenience.

Ms. Bartolini (San Marino): First of all, let me congratulate you, Mr. Chair, and all the members of the Bureau on your elections. I wish you a productive session.

San Marino aligns itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union (see A/C.1/78/PV.2). I would like to add some comments in my national capacity.

We live in an unprecedented and uncertain time in which global instability and international tensions are rising day by day. Conflicts, violence, hunger, displacement and climate emergencies have become the new normal.

Today one quarter of humankind lives in conflict-affected areas. Wars and rising tensions have caused and are causing terrible and dramatic impacts on humankind and on the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. We are clearly failing to deliver the promise of a better and united world. We need to recommit to peaceful resolution of conflicts and to bringing disarmament back on track in order to achieve peace and prosperity. We know that this can be achieved only through international cooperation, and the First Committee has a special responsibility to rebuild dialogue and trust among nations.

The Republic of San Marino is deeply concerned about the number and the scale of armed conflicts across the globe, which cause immense risks and suffering to millions of civilians. That concern is growing owing to the alarming increase of dangerous nuclear rhetoric and nuclear threats, which reinforce the image of a dark future instead of a sustainable one. San Marino condemns the Russian aggression against Ukraine and the threats to use nuclear weapons, in violation of international law and the Charter of the United Nations. Any use or threat of use of nuclear weapons is irresponsible and totally unacceptable. Unfortunately, today, the risk of nuclear weapons use, either deliberate or by accident, is higher than at any time since the Cold War. Nuclear weapons use would cause massive death and destruction and would create catastrophic and prolonged consequences for human health and the

environment — immediate and long-term consequences that no State would be able to address.

San Marino reaffirms its commitment to a world free of nuclear weapons, as well as the importance of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), which currently has more than 90 States signatories. We are glad to see that number growing, and we call on all States to sign and ratify it. The Treaty constitutes an effective measure for nuclear disarmament and complements the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

We welcome the steps undertaken by TPNW States parties to implement the Vienna Action Plan, adopted last June. San Marino looks forward to the second Meeting of States Parties to the TPNW later this year and wishes Mexico a successful presidency.

San Marino is very concerned about the erosion of the arms control regime and about the challenges to non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament obligations, as well as about the rising qualitative race to advance nuclear armaments. Hundreds of billions of dollars continue to be spent on the modernization and delivery systems of those weapons. Such activities are clearly in contradiction with the commitments undertaken with the NPT.

San Marino also condemns any use of weapons of mass destruction by anyone, anywhere and under any circumstances and calls on all parties to fulfil their commitments. There can be no justification for the use of such weapons, and States that are uncompliant with their obligations must be held accountable.

Cities, civilians and civil infrastructure have continued to be under attack also this year. Those indiscriminate attacks have killed, injured and traumatized tens of thousands of civilians. The use of explosive weapons in populated areas causes each year severe and life-changing damages. Furthermore, the destruction of hospitals, schools and infrastructure has a major impact on the daily life of civilians, who can no longer benefit from vital services. Such attacks cause the disruption of the health-care system, of education, of food production and distribution, of water delivery, sanitation and energy provision.

San Marino calls on all parties involved in armed conflicts to avoid the use of explosive weapons with wide-area effects in populated areas. And we invite all countries to support and implement the Political Declaration on Strengthening the Protection of Civilians

from the Humanitarian Consequences Arising from the Use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas.

The rapid advances in artificial intelligence have led to concerning levels of autonomy in conflict, with autonomous weapons systems able to independently choose and attack targets without human control. The increasing use of such weapons deepens moral, legal, ethical and humanitarian concerns. Substituting human decisions about life and death with software and digital systems is morally and legally unacceptable.

The Secretary-General, in the New Agenda for Peace, called on all States to adopt a legal treaty to prohibit and regulate autonomous weapons systems by 2026. San Marino firmly believes that there is an urgent need to adopt international legal regulations on autonomous weapons. Human beings must exert appropriate control in relation to the use of weapons system in order to ensure accountability and responsibility on the use of force.

San Marino is very concerned about the rising geopolitical tensions and about the consistent global increase in military spending. As pointed out by the Secretary-General, war is always a choice. In the meantime, peace remains an elusive promise for many around the world. We must not forget that we are here to offer an alternative.

Mr. Lagardien (South Africa), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.

San Marino firmly believes in a rules-based international order based on the Charter of the United Nations, on respect of international obligations, on disarmament, on international cooperation and on solidarity. Strengthening multilateralism, promoting prevention and advancing disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation are fundamental for achieving peace, international security and for building a healthy planet for the future. Those shared aspirations for peace and prosperity must be pursued with trust, strength and determination in order to advance our common goals.

Mr. Malovrh (Slovenia): Allow me, first, to congratulate the Chair on his election as the Chair of the First Committee. My delegation has full confidence in the Chair and the Bureau members to effectively steer the work of the Committee. Let me to assure them of my delegation's full support for their endeavours.

I would like to align my statement with the statement delivered by Ambassador Skoog on behalf

of the European Union (see A/C.1/78/PV.2), to which I will add some remarks in my national capacity.

Today we live in a complex world facing many challenges. The brutal, unprovoked and illegal aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine, which we condemn in the strongest terms, is still heavily disrupting international peace and security. Yesterday marked another tragic milestone. A devastating missile strike targeted a café and a grocery store in the Ukrainian settlement of Hroza, resulting in the loss of at least 50 civilians' lives. That is a reprehensible act that constitutes a clear war crime and demands accountability for those responsible.

We continue to face other sources of instability, from organized crime and armed violence to terrorism, cyberattacks, coup d'états and armed conflicts. One of the dire consequences of such a situation is continued pressure on general arms control, global non-proliferation and disarmament architecture and related processes.

Let me make three points on the present situation in global non-proliferation, disarmament processes and architecture.

First, let me share a few remarks on nuclear weapons. We regret that the Russian Federation continued its rhetoric on the threat of using nuclear weapons. That is irresponsible and unacceptable. The same goes for the recent announcement of Russia on deploying nuclear weapons to the territory of Belarus, a non-nuclear-weapon State. We appeal to those responsible not to implement that plan.

Slovenia continues to see the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) as a cornerstone of the global non-proliferation regime and a foundation for our path towards our ultimate goal — nuclear disarmament and a world free of nuclear weapons. In that context, Slovenia shares the vision enshrined in the declaration of the 2019 Stockholm Initiative for Nuclear Disarmament. The fundamental task for our generation must be to preserve and strengthen the NPT for future generations. That is why we are disappointed with the lack of a concrete outcome to the first session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2026 NPT Review Conference. Nonetheless, the working papers of Ambassador Viinanen of Finland offer a credible way forward towards the second session of the Preparatory Committee and the NPT 2026 Review Conference. We call upon Iran and the

Russian Federation, in particular, to demonstrate a more constructive attitude in upcoming sessions of the Preparatory Committee for the 2026 NPT Review Conference.

Secondly, allow me to explain our views on conventional weapons. The uncontrolled international trade of conventional weapons is a source of global instability. Slovenia believes that transparency and universalization of existing international conventions must be important priorities for the international community. Sometimes small moves can be essential. For example, reporting to the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms can improve transparency and confidence among the members of the international community. We appeal to all Member States to submit their national reports to the Register.

This year we will discuss different topics related to conventional weapons. We attach particular importance to the role of new and emerging technologies in the area of lethal autonomous weapons systems, including the responsible use of artificial intelligence in the military domain. Undoubtedly, the use of artificial intelligence will significantly affect international peace and security. We appeal to the international community to find common ground regarding that issue. Slovenia advocates the responsible behaviour of States using artificial intelligence in military matters and strict application of international humanitarian and human rights law in armed conflicts that use artificial intelligence.

Thirdly, let me comment on the state of international disarmament machinery. The Conference on Disarmament continues to be an essential part of that machinery. Slovenia regrets that the Conference remains a forum open to only some United Nations Member States. We appeal to the member States of the Conference to ensure inclusivity and multilateralism in its work, including the full participation of non-member States.

In conclusion, Slovenia will continue to support resolutions that promote gender equality and advance the women and peace and security agenda, including through gender considerations in arms control.

We welcome the comprehensive and positive perspective formulated by the Secretary-General in the New Agenda for Peace. That initiative will undoubtedly play an important role in next year's Summit of the Future, and we look forward to seeing the progress

that can be made towards creating a safer and more peaceful world.

Mr. Vongnorkeo (Lao People's Democratic Republic): I join other speakers in extending my sincere congratulations to the Chair and the other members of the Bureau on their elections to lead the First Committee and reaffirm my delegation's full support and cooperation.

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

We are meeting at a time when the international community continues to face multifaceted challenges, including geopolitical tensions and armed conflicts, posing a major threat to international peace and security. My delegation remains concerned about the rise in global military expenditures, which help to fuel tensions, rather than restore peace and security. This year we have witnessed that the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development has been severely hampered. It is therefore more crucial than ever to renew our commitment to safeguard our world from another catastrophe by upholding multilateralism and adhering to our obligations under multilateral disarmament treaties and the principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

The Lao People's Democratic Republic remains firmly committed to all disarmament regimes, as they provide necessary foundations for safeguarding global peace and security. In that context, we strongly adhere to all international obligations for the total elimination of nuclear weapons. We consider the entry into force of the historic Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) as one of the most important developments towards the elimination of nuclear weapons, and we hope that the political declaration and action plan adopted in the first meeting of the States Parties to the TPNW will pave the way for its effective implementation.

Since its entry into force, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) remains the cornerstone of international efforts on nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and peaceful uses of nuclear energy. In that regard, the Lao People's Democratic Republic reiterates the need to continue

strengthening the NPT regime, which is vital for advancing the actions required under the three pillars of the Treaty in a comprehensive and balanced manner.

Likewise, it is essential for the international community to fully and effectively implement the treaties concerning weapons of mass destruction, along with Security Council resolution 1540 (2004). The Lao People's Democratic Republic remains fully committed to the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention, as well as the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention, and we are of the view that all nations share collective responsibility to uphold the Conventions' norms.

The Open-ended Working Group (OEWG) on Security of and in the Use of Information and Communications Technologies 2021-2025 has played an important role and transformed itself into a mechanism for promoting international cooperation and assistance on cybersecurity. We highly value the discussions carried out in the OEWG, under United Nations auspices, which strongly emphasize the importance of capacity-building. It is encouraging to see that, throughout the sessions, many important initiatives and ideas have emerged, some of which have already been materialized. That reflects our collective efforts to produce actionable outcome. In that connection, we support a single-track approach to these negotiations. We believe a streamlined approach is particularly beneficial for developing countries, which often face constraints in capacity, resources and expertise in the field of information and communication technologies.

Concerning conventional weapons, we welcome the adoption of the final report of the eighth biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects by consensus and further call for international cooperation, including capacity-building support to developing countries. Likewise, we welcome the adoption of the final report of the OEWG to elaborate a set of political commitments as a new global framework that will address existing gaps in through-life ammunition management.

Although the conflict ended more than four decades years ago, the Lao People's Democratic Republic has witnessed first-hand the deadly impacts of conventional weapons and other explosive remnants of war, as these inhumane weapons continue to kill and maim innocent people. To date, the unexploded

remnants of cluster munitions have continued to pose a major threat to women and children and obstructed our national socioeconomic development capacity.

Taking into account its specific challenges and needs, the Lao People's Democratic Republic has adopted Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 18 in its national legislation, entitled "Lives Safe from Unexploded Ordnance", in order to specifically address the impacts caused by unexploded ordnance and developed the new ten-year unexploded ordnance strategy plan called "Safe Path Forward" for 2021-2030. This national strategic plan provides clear guidelines for reducing unexploded ordnance impacts through the implementation of legislation related to unexploded ordnance clearance and resource mobilization. On that note, we express our deep appreciation to all partners and donors who have rendered their support in the implementation of that national strategy and urge the international community to continue assisting the Lao People's Democratic Republic in the implementation of our national legislation on SDG 18.

In conclusion, my delegation believes that only through concerted political will and a renewed commitment will we be able to advance the international disarmament and non-proliferation agenda. We stand ready to engage constructively in the work of the Committee in order to pursue our common objective towards a peaceful and more secure world.

Mr. Hachem (Lebanon): Let me begin by congratulating Ambassador Paulauskas on his election as Chair of the First Committee, and the members of the Bureau as well. I wish them success in guiding the work of the Committee. Let me also congratulate Ambassador Pieris on chairing the work of the Committee during its seventy-seventh session.

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

We convene as great-Powers rivalry and tensions have reached their highest levels in generations and the international security environment is on the verge of an irreparable rift. For many countries, the fear of a possible nuclear war is increasing. The modernization and expansion of nuclear arsenals further complicate this environment. The arms control architecture and the non-proliferation regime are fraying and weakened, wiping out the gains of a half century in arms control.

The New START Treaty, the only leg remaining of the arms control regime, was suspended, thereby increasing risks of miscalculation. We are gravely concerned about the increasing risk of the use of nuclear weapons and the humanitarian catastrophe any such use would bring about.

The inability to reach consensus on an outcome document at the tenth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), for the second consecutive time, was a major disappointment, especially to non-nuclear-weapon States parties. We have witnessed the unwillingness of nuclear-weapon States to make practical commitments under pillar I of the Treaty on nuclear disarmament, pushing instead for reaffirmation of previous commitments, without timelines and benchmarks against which to measure progress.

Lebanon therefore calls for the full implementation of all previous commitments assumed by the nuclear-weapon States at the 1995, 2000 and 2010 NPT Review Conferences to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals, leading to nuclear disarmament. We also stress the need to take the steps necessary to ensure the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and for the commencement of substantive work on nuclear disarmament in the Conference on Disarmament.

Nuclear-weapon-free zones are a key component of the disarmament agenda and of ridding the world of nuclear weapons. Lebanon presided over the third session of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction in November 2022, held according to General Assembly decision 73/546, which constituted an opportunity for Lebanon to reflect its firm conviction about the necessity of ridding the region of weapons of mass destruction. We look forward to the success of the fourth session, to be held under the Libyan presidency.

Israel, the only possessor of nuclear weapons in the region, and itself not a party to the NPT, cannot continue defying the will of the international community and must comply with international non-proliferation obligations. Its compliance is a prerequisite for a region free of weapons of mass destruction and for peace and security in the region.

The enormous challenges posed by weapons of mass destruction should not lead us to lose sight of the dangers associated with conventional weapons. Lebanon

shares with other countries the deep concern about the challenges resulting from the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. We welcome the outcome document resulting from the eighth Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and looks forward to following up on its implementation in preparation for the holding of the fourth Review Conference of the Programme of Action in 2024.

Lebanon reiterates its commitment to the Convention on Cluster Munitions. Lebanon has painful experience with such weapons as a result of the many cluster munitions that Israel used against it in the 2006 war. Furthermore, the integration of artificial intelligence into military systems is likely to accelerate the shift towards increased and more complex forms of autonomous weapons in the near future. Therefore, the risks emanating from lethal autonomous weapons systems and their integration with artificial intelligence require more thorough and targeted discussions and commitments by Member States to ensure meaningful human control over them.

The increasing reliance of our nations on information and communications technologies and the risks emanating from their malicious use form an ever-present threat to national security. We look forward to reaching a successful outcome of the Open-ended Working Group on Security of and in the Use of Information and Communications Technologies 2021–2025, established by resolution 75/240 and welcome the adoption by consensus of the working group's second annual progress report (see A/78/265) last July.

Lebanon also stresses the need to protect outer space from an arms race, contamination and pollution. We stress the need for the international community to preserve outer space as common human property, available exclusively for peaceful uses. We also stress the need to reach a legally binding international instrument that would ban the placement of weapons in outer space, prohibit armed attacks on objects in outer space or deliberate harm to them and prevent the launching of an arms race and the development of technologies and weapons to be deployed in space or used against satellites. We welcome the adoption by consensus, within the framework of the Disarmament Commission, of the recommendations to promote the practical implementation of transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space,

with the aim of preventing an arms race in outer space. We hope that all countries will implement those recommendations.

We need to restart the conversation about disarmament. If we drop our commitment to multilateralism for unilateralism, we risk sliding back on a terrible trail that has been tread before, and its end is well known. We should unite to avoid this at all costs.

Mr. Isabirye (Uganda): On behalf of the Ugandan delegation, I wish to congratulate the Chair and other Bureau members on their elections to steer the First Committee at the seventh-eighth session of the General Assembly. Considering the gravity of the challenges facing the international security regime today, including conflicts, terrorism and climate change, we are confident that the Chair and his team will guide the Committee towards solutions to these issues. We pledge our total support and cooperation.

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

Uganda is committed to promoting global peace and stability, based on the principle of equal security for all States, without discrimination. We believe that embracing multilateralism in the disarmament agenda is the most effective way to achieve a peaceful, secure future free from nuclear weapons. Uganda reiterates its commitment to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons as a fundamental component of the global disarmament and non-proliferation efforts. However, we regret the failure of its States parties to reach consensus during the most recent Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty — they missed a valuable opportunity. We therefore urge Member States to continue to hold steadfast to the Treaty's core principles of disarmament, non-proliferation and the use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes.

Uganda remains committed to realizing general and complete disarmament under the international management and control mechanisms. We therefore implore nuclear-weapon States to reduce military spending on weapons of mass destruction in all their aspects and to embrace disarmament for global peace, security, development and climate change. Some States' continued possession of nuclear weapons only encourages others to seek them as a deterrent. Uganda

fully supports the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, as it seeks to ban all nuclear explosions in all environments for military or civilian purposes.

Uganda reiterates its support for the concept and establishment of nuclear-free zones. It is committed to the Treaty of Pelindaba on establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Africa, which prohibits States from conducting research on, developing, manufacturing, stockpiling, possessing or having control over any nuclear explosive device by any means, anywhere, and bans receiving assistance on research or development, as well as stationing any nuclear explosive devices in the nuclear-free zone.

The unregulated use of conventional weapons has had a detrimental impact on global peace and security by fuelling conflicts, terrorism and organized crime in various parts of the world. We strongly urge all Member States, in particular those producing and trading in conventional weapons, to embrace established international regimes such as the Arms Trade Treaty to regulate those weapons and prevent them from spreading into wrong hands.

Uganda fully supports the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. Uganda, like many other parts of the world, has experienced the negative consequences of illicit small arms and light weapons, which have posed a significant threat to human security by damaging fragile economies, fuelling conflicts and deterring investments.

We are concerned about the increasing use of information and communications technologies, including the Internet, in conflict situations. Quite often, the inappropriate use of those technologies has destroyed critical infrastructure, spread terrorism and other harmful propaganda, influenced domestic politics and engaged in subversion to destabilize Governments. As the Committee deliberates global peace and security matters, we must develop the relevant instruments to regulate cyberspace management to ensure that it does not threaten international peace and security.

The challenge for the international community is to act in unity to ensure full compliance with nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament and to deal with all situations that threaten international peace and security. We call on Member States in conflict situations to embrace dialogue and avoid the risk of losing lives owing to violent wars. My delegation is ready to work

constructively within the Committee and looks forward to making effective contributions to the outcomes of the seventy-eighth session with a view to achieving the common goals of global peace and security.

Mr. Gala López (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): We congratulate the Chair and the other members of the Bureau on their elections to lead the First Committee.

We align ourselves with the statement delivered by the representative of Indonesia, on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/78/PV.2), and that of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, on behalf of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (see A/C.1/78/PV.3).

We begin this new session of the First Committee with a long list of issues to be discussed in the area of disarmament in the context of international security in order to address long-standing global threats and emerging new challenges. Nevertheless, given that a world free from nuclear weapons has yet to be attained, nuclear disarmament must remain the highest priority in the field of disarmament. The total elimination of nuclear weapons in a transparent, verifiable and irreversible manner is more than a legitimate, long-standing aspiration — it is a matter of survival for humankind. That crucially high priority cannot be ignored in the discussions at the Summit of the Future on efforts to contribute to international peace and security.

We advocate the universalization of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. The Treaty's adoption and entry into force constituted a milestone in the history of the United Nations, codifying the illegitimacy and illegality of nuclear weapons in international law and categorically proscribing the existence, use and threat of use of such weapons and all types of nuclear testing. Each new State that joins that instrument of the disarmament and non-proliferation regime brings us one step closer to de-legitimizing nuclear weapons.

We reaffirm our commitment to the full, effective and non-discriminatory implementation of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention and the Chemical Weapons Convention. We welcome the establishment of the Working Group on the Strengthening of the Convention and support the undertaking of legally binding verification measures and the establishment of a mechanism to ensure the full, effective and non-discriminatory implementation of the Convention's provisions for international cooperation. We reject

selective, biased and politically motivated approaches to the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention, as well as the creation of mechanisms and procedures that go beyond the technical mandate of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons.

We condemn the imposition of unilateral coercive measures that limit or impede, in a discriminatory manner, the exercise of the right to the peaceful use of nuclear energy or the promotion of international cooperation and the scientific and technological progress of Member States in the biological and chemical fields. Those illegal actions undermine the socioeconomic development of the States that are subject to them and violate the provisions of several legally binding instruments in the field of disarmament. We reject the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States against Cuba, which violates the provisions of article X of the Biological Weapons Convention and article XI of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

We reaffirm our commitment to implementing the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. We highlight the need to address the root causes of that scourge, and to that end we will continue to advocate for increased international cooperation. We reaffirm the right of States to acquire and possess arms for their legitimate self-defence and security needs.

We call for the adoption, as soon as possible, of a legally binding international instrument, within the framework of the United Nations, prohibiting the manufacture, possession and use of fully autonomous weapons and establishing specific regulations for the use of semi-autonomous weapons. A framework must also be put in place within the United Nations to monitor the military uses of artificial intelligence, with the participation of all Member States, with a view to producing an overall assessment of the uses of that technology.

We support the continuation of the work of the Open-ended Working Group on Security of and in the Use of Information and Communications Technologies 2021–2025 — a mechanism that allows States to discuss the matter, which is of increasing international relevance, in a transparent, inclusive and equal manner. We reject the covert and illegal use of information and communications technologies and radio-electronic space to subvert the legal and political order of States and the use of those technologies to finance, encourage

and commit acts of violence and terrorism. We denounce the use of those platforms from United States territory against Cuba. We call for an immediate end to such policies, which run counter to national sovereignty and are incompatible with peace, security, development and cooperation among States.

We advocate for the exclusively pacific use of cyberspace and outer space. There is a need for legally binding instruments that address the legal gaps in both areas. We hope to contribute to discussions in order to make progress towards preventing an arms race in outer space. We advocate for the negotiation and adoption of a legally binding instrument prohibiting autonomous weapons and regulating semi-autonomous weapons. After a decade of discussions in the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, concrete steps must now be taken.

We welcome the adoption of recommendations on transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space by the Disarmament Commission at the conclusion of its review cycle in 2023. We call for the Conference on Disarmament's negotiating mandate to be fulfilled and for its procedures and practices to be preserved. It is a priority to break the long-standing impasse in that body and to muster sufficient political will to make its work substantive and relevant once again. We will continue to promote the preservation and strengthening of the disarmament machinery, with strict adherence to multilateralism and the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and international law.

Mr. Al Rubkhi (Oman) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to begin my statement, which I am delivering on behalf of the delegation of Sultanate of Oman, by expressing to the Chair and the other members of the Bureau my congratulations on their elections. I would also like to express that my country's delegation is ready to cooperate with them and all other delegations to achieve our desired goals and objectives.

My delegation aligns itself with the statements delivered by the Permanent Representatives of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and the sisterly Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan on behalf of the Arab Group on the issues of disarmament and international security (see A/C.1/78/PV.2).

We have noticed the state of concern during this session, as expressed by multiple Member State delegations, because of the current disarmament

situation. The security environment is more complex and dangerous today than ever before, and international peace and security are thus subjected to more challenges. We believe that the main reason for that is the trend away from the lofty principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations, which have emphasized good neighbourliness, non-interference in the internal affairs of States, the peaceful settlement of disputes and cooperation for the common good of States and peoples.

My delegation calls on all Member States to work together in a spirit of responsibility and partnership to repair cracks in the system of joint international action in order to maintain international peace and security and establish an international order that takes into account the needs for stability and security of all States and peoples around the world, without exception, and according to the concept of common security for all.

My delegation aligns itself with everyone who has expressed regret over the inability of the ninth and tenth Review Conferences of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) to adopt outcome documents. We are concerned about the impediments that have prevented the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) in the Middle East. Those impediments are a violation of the NPT provisions and the Review Conferences' resolutions. The circumstances and challenges of our world — in particular in the Middle East, which is a vital world region — lead us to reiterate our call for serious and responsible efforts to take steady steps towards ridding the Middle East of nuclear weapons and other WMDs and establishing a fair, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East on the basis of the two-State solution and other terms of reference. We believe that this is the best way to maintain security, stability and peaceful coexistence in the Middle East region.

My country, the Sultanate of Oman, has a vision based on the fact that relations among States must be founded on the steadfast foundations of trust, mutual respect and a commitment to the principles and provisions of the Charter of the United Nations and international law. In our view, those are the main pillars to promote security and stability at the regional and international levels. Based on that vision, my country attaches utmost importance to international treaties on disarmament, including the NPT of 1968, the Biological Weapons Convention of 1972, the Comprehensive

Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty of 1996 and the Chemical Weapons Convention of 1997. We find that those treaties and their protocols, assurances and resolutions, including the 1995 resolution on establishing a zone free of nuclear weapons and other WMDs in the Middle East, are an integrated legal regime for non-proliferation. We must preserve that regime and not undermine it in order to guarantee its credibility and universality.

My country also welcomed the three sessions on establishing a zone free of nuclear weapons and other WMDs in the Middle East, which were convened under the presidency of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan in 2019, the State of Kuwait in 2021 and the Lebanese Republic in 2022. We reiterate our support for sisterly Libya's efforts towards convening the fourth session in November. We call on all States, in particular depositary States of the NPT, to participate actively in the conference and to facilitate a legally binding treaty on establishing a zone free of nuclear weapons and other WMDs in the Middle East. We believe that such a zone will help to end conflicts and establish peace, stability and coexistence in the region.

My country reiterates its firm position on the need to intensify international efforts to promote the peaceful use of atomic energy, and we emphasize the right of all State parties without exception to acquire the nuclear material, equipment and technology for such peaceful purposes under control of the International Atomic Energy Agency. We also call on all States to translate those obligations into tangible actions without politicization and selectivity, as per international treaties and international law. Moreover, we believe that any unilateral acts of sabotage that go beyond the mandate of the international community represented by the Security Council or against peaceful nuclear facilities, regardless of their source, do not serve stability and security and will have dire consequences for millions of people in the region and beyond. Therefore, we call on the international community to make practical and tangible efforts to prevent such attacks.

Furthermore, we call for the promotion of international cooperation in the area of information and communications security, in particular cybersecurity, and I would like to refer to my Government's efforts in that regard. The digital defence centre in the Sultanate of Oman has developed a national framework for the policies and criteria that must be applied to secure systems and networks in various fields, with the aim of minimizing electronic risks and threats in

addition to establishing a digital environment in line with global policies. Those policies cover various fields, including information technology, the Internet, industrial control systems and future technologies. It is hoped that those fields will contribute to economic diversity and financial sustainability, and that national policies to match variables and developments in cybersecurity will be reviewed and updated.

In conclusion, I take this opportunity to reiterate my country's call on all States to work together in a spirit of cooperation and responsibility in order to establish a safer and more stable world.

Mr. Moharram (Saudi Arabia) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, my country's delegation aligns itself with the statements delivered by the representatives of the Hashemite Kingdom 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 Kingdom of Saudi Arabia stresses the importance of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the balance among its three pillars. The Kingdom has acceded to the Treaty and contributed to international efforts aimed at achieving its universality and the total elimination of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, in accordance with article VI of the NPT. We believe that peace and security cannot be achieved through the possession of lethal weapons.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is of the view that our priority today must be investing in human beings and human capital, while working to advance societies in order to achieve development goals, mitigate the suffering of developing States and the least-developed States and redirect investments towards development. The continued expansion and development of deterrence systems will inevitably lead to further complications at the international level, increasing polarization and the return to military blocs, which, in turn, will lead to greater military spending, to the detriment of development. Therefore, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has taken bold measures to achieve regional understandings and realize security and stability while promoting development in the Middle East region.

My country believes that the establishment of zones free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction around the world is the first step towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons. The establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons would

not be difficult to realize. The Review Conferences of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons have highlighted the call upon Israel to quickly join the Treaty and subject all its nuclear facilities to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) comprehensive safeguard system in order to contribute to maintaining peace, security and stability for all peoples of the region.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia calls for States to commit to the safeguards agreements signed with the IAEA. Those States must also confirm that they do not have undeclared nuclear programmes and activities and that all pending issues must be addressed with the Agency.

All States have the inherent right to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes in accordance with the IAEA criteria of safety and security, its procedures and under its supervision. My country also supports facilitating the transfer of technology and expertise related to the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. The Kingdom urges States that possess developed nuclear technology to help less-developed States to overcome the barriers preventing the transfer of such technology to developing States.

It is important that outer space continue to be used only for peaceful purposes, not military purposes nor the development of technologies related to ballistic missiles. International agreements have contributed to promoting the peaceful use of outer space and regulating behaviours and activities in it. Efforts to control outer space must not restrict any State's inherent right to use outer space for peaceful purposes.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia welcomes the establishment of international, effective and uniform standards to regulate trafficking in conventional weapons. They must include trafficking in illegal arms, provided that such standards do not put restrictions on States' ability to acquire defensive weapons for preserving their national security and capabilities. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has taken effective measures to prevent the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. We have acceded to the Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition. In addition to the use of the latest technology, we have taken several measures to control governmental and private weapons in order to prevent them from falling into the hands of criminals and terrorist groups.

Our specialized agencies also coordinate among themselves to manage issues related to small arms, light weapons and conventional ammunition. In that regard, the Kingdom reiterates its rejection of linking the issue of small arms and light weapons to that of conventional ammunition. We stress our position expressed at the third session of the Open-ended Working Group on Ammunition, namely that, for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, conventional ammunition management is an issue related to national security and subject to the principle of sovereignty. The Kingdom welcomes all international initiatives aimed at addressing the issue of surplus ammunition on a voluntary basis. We will deal with any international initiative on managing surplus ammunition so long as it is in conformity with our national legislation and sovereignty.

In conclusion, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia regrets the failure of the tenth NPT Review Conference to adopt an outcome document, which was the second time that has happened, since the ninth Review Conference in 2015 was also unable to adopt one — nor did the first preparatory meeting adopt one. Those repeated failures pose a difficult challenge to the Treaty and its provisions and require all of us to shoulder our responsibility in preserving the legal and binding nature of the NPT. If the situation continues, it will affect international efforts aimed at achieving disarmament and non-proliferation.

Mr. Bektashi (Albania): Joining other colleagues, I would like to congratulate Ambassador Paulauskas on his election as Chair of the First Committee and wish him, the members of the Bureau and all colleagues here a successful session.

Albania aligns itself with statement delivered by the delegation of the European Union (see A/C.1/78/PV.2). I would like to add the following remarks in my national capacity.

Today the core principles of the United Nations are under threat, and the world is undergoing profound transformation. The international security architecture is being challenged by conflicts, cyberattacks and nuclear threats. As stated in the policy brief on a New Agenda for Peace, 55 years since the adoption of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the nuclear disarmament and arms control regime is eroding, and non-proliferation is being challenged. The NPT has an essential role to play in the maintenance of international peace and security and an increased contribution to sustainable development. The success of the Review Conference of the Parties to the

Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons to be held in 2026 would positively affect the full implementation of the Treaty.

For almost 20 months, the unjustified and unprovoked military aggression of Russia against Ukraine has seriously challenged the international rules-based order and its common shared values, democratic principles and norms. That is a violation of the Charter of the United Nations and the commitment to the 1994 Budapest Memorandum. Russian troops have occupied the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant, immensely increasing the nuclear threat. The deployment of Russian nuclear weapons on the territory of Belarus only deteriorates the situation further. We fully support the professional work of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and its contribution in maintaining the security of the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant in Ukraine.

We call on Iran to return to the implementation of its nuclear-related commitments under the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, as we believe that this is the only international platform that could verify the purposes of its nuclear programme.

As a State party to the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological Weapons Convention, Albania considers these multilateral instruments to be very important and concrete examples of effective multilateralism. We regularly support and co-sponsor related draft resolutions in the First Committee.

As we have pointed out in the Security Council as well, Syria should fully cooperate with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons in a transparent and verifiable manner regarding its chemical weapons programme, in compliance with Security Council resolution 2118 (2013).

Albania has adopted internal legislation and established the relevant institution on the export control regime, information exchange on transfers of conventional weapons and dual-use goods and technologies. Albania is a signatory to the Proliferation Security Initiative and is in the process of applying to become a member of the Wassenaar Arrangement.

The risk of terrorists or other non-State actors acquiring weapons of mass destruction remains a real and serious threat to international security. Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) remains a very valuable instrument that provides guidance to Member States in taking all necessary measures to prevent non-State

actors from acquiring nuclear, chemical, biological or radiological weapons or the equipment necessary for their production. The growing international threat coming from the unlawful weapons of mass destruction, ballistic missiles and nuclear programme of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea remains a cause of concern. That programme should come comprehensively and irreversibly to an end through transparent talks and good-faith diplomacy.

Albania strongly advocates the prompt entry into force and universalization of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

We are particularly concerned by the recent increase in cyberattacks and malicious digital activities. The programme of action to advance responsible State behaviour in the use of information and communications technologies in the context of international security offers an inclusive, action-oriented platform for the implementation of the United Nations-agreed framework. We look forward to engaging constructively towards establishing a truly human-centric global digital compact, as proposed by the Secretary-General.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize the importance of gender equality and the inclusion of the youth in disarmament discussions and processes. We encourage United Nations initiatives with the younger generations, believing that the commitment, energy and creativity of young people could give the process the fresh input needed.

The Acting Chair: I shall now call on the delegations that have requested 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 three minutes for the second intervention.

I will begin by first giving the floor to the representative of China, who was unable to exercise their right to a second intervention yesterday owing to time constraints (see A/C.1/78/PV.5).

Mr. Nan Li (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): In response to the statement made by the representative of Japan (see A/C.1/78/PV.5) regarding the Fukushima contaminated water, I would reiterate China's position. The international concerns about the discharge of the nuclear-contaminated water are science-based and arise from the desire to fend off unpredictable ecological and environmental hazards. China's position on Japan's ocean discharge is consistent and clear: we firmly

oppose such unilateral discharge actions by Japan. The Japanese Government must respond to all the concerns of the international community, have full and sincere communication with neighbouring countries and dispose of the nuclear-contaminated water in a responsible way. The international community must push for an enduring, effective international monitoring arrangement and ensure that the neighbouring countries and other stakeholders can participate substantively in the arrangement.

Ms. Maayan (Israel): I am compelled to take the floor regarding references concerning my country made by the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Iran's allegations against Israel are no less than absurd. Its track record throughout the years is well known. So, this time, all we request is to remind this forum of the harsh language used by International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Director General Grossi just three weeks ago, following the de-designation of experienced Agency inspectors assigned to conduct verification activities in Iran under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement. In reaction to Iran's hostile act, Mr. Grossi stated, among others, that he:

"strongly condemn[s] this disproportionate and unprecedented unilateral measure, which affects the normal planning and conduct of Agency verification activities in Iran and openly contradicts the cooperation that should exist between the Agency and Iran. [...] [IAEA's] experience demonstrates that shutting out Agency inspectors affects [the IAEA's] essential verification mandate and is not the way of working in a cooperative manner. I call upon the Iranian Government to reconsider its decision and to return to a path of cooperation with the Agency".

The IAEA Director General said those words not three years or three months ago, but three weeks ago. Against that backdrop, is it not ludicrous that we sit here and listen to the Iranian representative openly lying about his country's record and intentions while simultaneously spreading fabrications about Israel? Iran attempts to destabilize the region by using every possible tool at its disposal: terrorism, the use of missile and rocket attacks against its neighbours and attacks on merchant ships on the high seas from its own territory and the territory of other countries in the region, namely Syria, Yemen or Iraq. Iran's support for terrorist organizations, which includes supplying weapons,

financial and political support, and military training, contradicts numerous Security Council resolutions.

Finally, I must note that the Iranian representative referred to my country in a way that contradicts the official United Nations custom. Our official name, once more, is the State of Israel, and we request delegations to respect this.

Mr. Vorontsov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): In the context of the situation around Transnistria, we consider absolutely unacceptable any attempts by the delegation of Moldova to disparage Russia's peacekeeping efforts. Committed to the political settlement of the Transnistrian problem, the Russian Federation has been playing and continues to play the role of co-mediator and guarantor in this process, based on respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Moldova. That language is contained in the preamble of the primary agreement between Russia and Moldova of 19 November 2001. However, against the backdrop of the persistent lack of political will on the part of Moldovan authorities to address problems related to the Transnistrian settlement, the dialogue between Chisinau and Tiraspol continues to deteriorate.

As for the Russian military presence on the left bank of the Dniester River, the mandate of the current peacekeeping mission, which has proved its effectiveness over the past 30 years, is far from being exhausted and clearly links our continued involvement to the reaching of a political agreement on the conflict. So far, that is a distant prospect. Today the peacekeepers are the only real factor guaranteeing peace and stability in the region.

Another reason for the presence of the Operational Group of Russian Forces in Transnistria, in addition to supporting the Russian peacekeeping contingent, as part of the joint peacekeeping force in which Moldova also participates, is the need to guard stores of military property. That is our responsibility. We are not denying our responsibility to dispose of those materials, and we stand ready to consider, once the situation in Ukraine has been resolved, practical steps in that area. However, it is extremely important that all technical aspects of such work are determined exclusively on a bilateral basis between the respective agencies of Russia and Moldova.

We equally reject the allegations made against Russia, which are detached from reality, with regard to the special military operation in Ukraine. Such

insinuations have just one goal — to divert the attention from the criminal actions of the Ukrainian armed forces. The Ukrainian authorities and their Western supporters draw attention to the losses and suffering of only one side, while blocking the information about victims and destruction on the territories of the Donbas, Zaporizhzhya and Kherson regions. Western countries do not even mention that in their statements. That is a double standard and is hypocritical.

Since February 2022, as a result of the actions of the Ukrainian armed forces, 5,000 civilians, including almost 200 children, have died and approximately the same number have been injured.

The accusations of forced deportation of Ukrainian citizens to Russia are speculations in an attempt to provide some explanation for the fact that millions of Ukrainians are fleeing to Russia to escape the crimes of the Kyiv regime. According to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, our country has received more than 2.8 million refugees. In reality, those figures are much higher. Approximately 5.5 million people have entered Russia since the beginning of the special military operation. In comparison, all European Union member States have received a total of approximately 4 million Ukrainian refugees on their territories. I think that comparison needs no explanation. All those people have entered our country voluntarily, saving their own lives and the lives of their children. They are quickly provided assistance in finding accommodation and jobs, and their children are enrolled in kindergartens and educational institutions.

Mr. Turner (United States of America): As part of our ongoing effort to separate fact from fiction, I would like to respond to Russia's demand yesterday that the United States withdraw all of its nuclear weapons from Europe, the existence of which Russia called escalatory.

Let me begin by noting that the New START Treaty, which Russia has invalidly purported to suspend, covers strategic warheads only. The United States believes that the next arms control arrangement between the United States and Russia should address all of each side's nuclear weapons, including so-called non-strategic nuclear weapons. So far, Russia has opposed bringing those weapons into arms control, but the United States will continue to argue that doing so is in the best interest of both sides, as well as the entire world.

The small number of nuclear warheads the United States maintains in Europe remains unchanged, despite

Russia's increasingly destabilizing actions since 2014. The number of those warheads is far lower than the thousands of so-called non-strategic nuclear warheads Russia possesses, none of which are covered by any treaty whatsoever.

The ground-based intermediate range missile that Russia developed, flight tested and possessed, in material breach of the Intermediate range Nuclear Forces Treaty, is intended to deliver precisely such nuclear warheads, as are a host of other Russian nuclear and dual-capable delivery systems. Moreover, Russia is also in the process of actively developing and testing other systems that are not covered by any treaty, such as its nuclear-powered, nuclear-tipped cruise missile and its nuclear-powered, nuclear-tipped underwater vehicle. President Putin reported that the latter underwent further testing only days ago.

The United States will continue to act responsibly and will seek to uphold and strengthen nuclear stability. The United States has publicly stated it does not see a need to increase its own nuclear deterrent on its own territory or elsewhere as a result of those Russian actions.

In short, it is Russia, through its reckless nuclear rhetoric and decision to station nuclear weapons in Belarus, that continues to escalate tensions in connection with its ongoing, unprovoked war against Ukraine.

Mr. Siddique (Pakistan): My delegation is exercising its right of reply in response to the comments made by India.

Let my delegation set the record straight: Jammu and Kashmir is not a part of India. It never was. It will never be. United Nations resolutions have set its status as a disputed territory, which has yet to be resolved, as per the wishes of the Kashmiri people, through a free and fair plebiscite, in accordance with United Nations resolutions.

Jammu and Kashmir is one of the oldest items on the agenda of the Security Council. For the past seven decades, India has stood in continued violation of Security Council resolutions. India has denied the Kashmiris their inherent and inalienable right to self-determination, as envisaged and enshrined in Security Council resolutions.

India's actions of 5 August 2019 have further jeopardized regional peace and security. More recently, India's massive acquisition of arms, evident

from increased spending and budgetary allocation for arms acquisition, is provoking a further arms race in South Asia.

Finally, my delegation urges India to respect United Nations resolutions and avoid misleading this forum through its blatant lies and misinformation.

Mr. Ogasawara (Japan): I am compelled to exercise the right of reply as in the previous statement made by the representative of China there was a reference to the discharge of Advanced Liquid Processing System (ALPS)-treated water into the sea.

The Government of Japan has always provided detailed explanations on that matter to the international community based on scientific evidence in a transparent manner. The Government of Japan has continued those efforts while undergoing the review by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), which has the authority to establish or adopt and apply international safety standards in the field of nuclear energy under the Statute of the International Atomic Energy Agency. The Government of Japan has been taking measures that strictly abide by relevant international law, while giving due consideration to international practices and will continue doing so.

The water being discharged is water that is further diluted from ALPS-treated water, which has been sufficiently purified until the concentration of radioactive materials other than tritium is below the regulatory standard. As for tritium, which is found in water discharged from nuclear facilities around the world in normal operations, the concentration level discharged from nuclear facilities around the world in normal operations is around one seventh of the drinking water standard of the World Health Organization after dilution. Through the ALPS treatment, which has sufficient and stable qualification capabilities, the concentration of radioactive materials other than tritium will be less than the regulatory standard.

Actually, the discharge of ALPS-treated water started on 24 August. The Government of Japan and the Tokyo Electric Power Company Holdings, with the involvement of the IAEA, have been monitoring the discharged water but have not found any anomalies. The IAEA has confirmed and publicly stated that the level of tritium in the discharged water is below the standard.

The Government of Japan will continue to provide necessary information, including the results of the monitoring, to the international community in a timely

and transparent manner and will continue its efforts to gain further understanding from the international community regarding the handling of ALPS-treated water.

The Government of Japan will continue to explain its efforts to the international community in a transparent manner and is willing to discuss the details, on the basis of scientific evidence, at the appropriate forum — not the First Committee — with the relevant expertise.

Mr. Al Ashkar (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): I asked to take the floor to exercise my right of response following what we heard in the statements made by the representatives of Albania and Israel.

We reject the reference made to cooperation between Syria and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. That is something that we all do and must recognize. All States are entitled to do so. Since we joined that body in 2013, which we did on a voluntary basis, we have cooperated fully. Since joining, we have destroyed our chemical-weapon stockpiles and the sites in question, and we have done so swiftly.

Furthermore, what we are witnessing here is political manipulation to exert pressure on Syria as a way of extorting us. It can be a secret for no one that many States use agendas here for political gain. Baseless accusations against Syria are hostile propaganda against my country.

Israel and its representative made a mention of Syria, and I would like to respond by saying that the representative of the Israeli is in no position to make any comments or give lessons on the human rights records of other countries. The Israeli entity is the only one in our region to have a stock of weapons of mass destruction. The possession by Israel of such weapons is a threat to regional peace and security and, indeed, international peace and security. When it comes to the hostile occupation of Arab territories, including the Syrian Golan Heights, in particular, for decades Israel has flouted the relevant resolutions of the United Nations and the will of the international community, despite all calls for it to evacuate that territory.

Mr. Ghorbanpour Najafabadi (Islamic Republic of Iran): I am compelled to exercise my right of reply to address and refute the allegations put forth by the representative of the Israeli regime, which consistently include the dissemination of misleading, baseless and fabricated claims against my country.

In fact, such allegations are being used as a means to deflect attention from their transgressions of international law, including acts that have been condemned as genocides, war crimes, crimes against humanity and crimes of aggression. It is beyond dispute that the Israeli regime has adopted a pattern of behaviour that attempts to obfuscate its actions by employing disinformation and contrived crises. Those tactics cannot exonerate the Israeli regime for its inherently culpable conduct or its penchant for policies that promote expansionism and bellicosity.

Over the decades, the regime has flouted international law and disregarded resolutions issued by the Security Council, the United Nations and other bodies, with apparent impunity. Its continued engagement in unlawful, unjustified and unjust activities within occupied territories, encompassing actions such as targeted assassinations, including the assassination of several Iranian nuclear scientists; acts of sabotage, like terrorist attacks against the Natanz nuclear facility, which was under the monitoring of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in 2021; as well as cyberattacks and kinetic attacks against sovereign States, remains a point of grave concern.

When addressing the matter of weapons of mass destruction, it is imperative to note that the Israeli regime stands as the sole entity in the Middle East that has refrained from aligning itself with international accords like the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological Weapons Convention. By consistently failing to declare its nuclear arsenal and undertake disarmament commitments and by refusing entry to international inspectors to assess its nuclear programme and activities, the Israeli regime remains in breach of international law.

Moreover, the gravest peril to regional stability arises from the nuclear weapons maintained by this regime. Its endeavours to depict Iran's exclusively peaceful nuclear-weapon endeavours as a destabilizing factor lack credibility and serve only as a means of deception and diversion to obscure its nuclear ambitions. A stark illustration of this regime's disregard for international norms and principles is exemplified by the recent proposition of a so-called credible nuclear threat against Iran, which was audaciously articulated by the regime's Prime Minister during the seventy-eighth session of the General Assembly high-level general debate, just two weeks ago (see A/78/PV.10),

for the second time. The first time was in 2018 (see A/73/PV.10), when the same person threatened Iran with nuclear annihilation.

We unequivocally denounce its unlawful, illicit and reckless actions and stance. We call upon the global community to hold this regime accountable for its widespread violations of human rights and to pursue measures that prevent the regime's further acquisition of nuclear armaments.

In response to delegations' unacceptable statements made thus far or to be made in the next stage of this debate, on Iran's peaceful nuclear programme, it is imperative to reiterate and highlight the robust and continued verification and monitoring efforts carried out by the IAEA within Iran's nuclear facilities, as I mentioned in previous statements.

On the Iranian missile programme, I have to reiterate that it is a homegrown defence capability that fully complies with our international commitments.

As for the Ukraine war, I would like to respond to any unacceptable statements made or to be made by saying that Iran categorically rejects any insinuation of its involvement in that war.

Finally, to statements made by certain delegations some days ago from the Middle East, addressing Iran through a heavily politicized lens, while obviously avoiding any mention of the actual regional —

The Acting Chair: I will have to stop the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran, as his time has elapsed.

Mrs. Nipomici (Republic of Moldova): With regard to the statement just made by the representative of the Russian Federation regarding the withdrawal of Russian military forces from our territory, I would like to note that our calls are made in line with our neutrality status per the 1999 Istanbul outcome documents, as well as resolution 72/282.

Ms. Maayan (Israel): I will not waste this forum's time by reacting to our Syrian colleague's automated response, since I did not mention him in my first one.

I am, however, compelled to take the floor for a second time because of the outrageous statement made just now by the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran. We reject the accusations by that speaker, especially in the

light of the simple fact that actions speak much louder than words, and it is Iran that continues to destabilize the Middle East and global stability, as mentioned by so many speakers throughout the week.

Mr. Ghorbanpour Najafabadi (Islamic Republic of Iran): While I reiterate what I said in my previous statement, I would like to address the baseless allegations about my country that were once again made by the representative of the Israeli regime. I am not surprised by those false claims, as the Israeli regime has repeatedly demonstrated its disregard for international law. It has been responsible for numerous cyberattacks on various sectors in Iran that range from peaceful nuclear facilities to critical public services such as emergency aid.

With regard to the assassination of our scientists and the attack on our nuclear facility in Natanz, we strongly condemn Israel's irresponsible behaviour. It is important to highlight the oppressive and apartheid nature of its regime. We believe that the international community should hold Israel accountable and force it to accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the Chemical Weapons Convention, the Biological Weapons Convention and other instruments. Moreover, Israel has violated 29 Security Council resolutions, which are legally binding on Member States according to the Charter of the United Nations. It therefore cannot portray itself as a country or entity that abides by international law, while blaming others. Furthermore, it has also consistently violated resolution 2231 (2015). We urge the international community to take a stand against the Israeli regime's actions, both in terms of cybersecurity and its broader violations of international law.

The Acting Chair: Before we adjourn, I would like to remind delegations that the list of speakers for the thematic debate closes on Wednesday, 11 October at 6 p.m. All delegations intending to take the floor during the thematic debate should inscribe their names on the list.

The next meeting of the First Committee will be held on Monday, 9 October at 3 p.m. sharp in this conference room. We will continue with the general debate, and I appeal to all delegations to be punctual so as to enable us to proceed with our work in a timely manner.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.