



General Assembly

Seventy-eighth session

First Committee

9th meeting

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Official Records

Chair: Mr. Paulauskas (Lithuania)

The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Agenda items 90 to 106 (continued)

General debate on all disarmament and international security agenda items

The Chair: As members are aware, the general debate is scheduled to end this afternoon, and 17 speakers remain on the list. The First Committee has also agreed that at least one and a half hours of the general debate will be devoted to statements by civil-society speakers.

To accommodate that decision, should the Committee not hear all the civil-society speakers scheduled for this afternoon, we will hear the remaining ones tomorrow at 3 p.m., before the Committee considers the agenda items on revitalization of the General Assembly and programme planning.

I would further remind delegations that the rolling list of speakers for the thematic discussions will be closed today at 6 p.m. Therefore, all delegations intending to take the floor during that segment that have not yet inscribed themselves on the list are encouraged to do so before the deadline.

We will now turn to our list of speakers for today, and I urge all delegations taking the floor to kindly keep in mind the suggested time limit for those statements.

Ms. Tesfamariam (Eritrea): Allow me to join others in congratulating you, Mr. Chair, and the members of the Bureau on your election to steer the work of the First Committee.

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

Let me make the following brief remarks in my national capacity.

Eight decades after the historic establishment of the United Nations — which aimed to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war and to ensure justice and prosperity for all — neither efforts towards international peace and security nor the disarmament and non-proliferation architectures seem to have guaranteed an enduring peace based on legality, justice and a sustainable equilibrium. Peace and development remain equally elusive.

Those glaring realities have been alluded to by most delegations. However, the conundrum is: what avenues do we have to escape that looming predicament? Indeed, there can be no single panacea for such complex and interlocking challenges. However, easing global geopolitical tensions, building confidence and mending the trust deficit remain critical imperatives. The principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and the notions of multilateralism and multilaterally agreed terms remain valid to serve the noble cause of international peace and security. The conviction that dialogue is the best path must also be restored so as to address the issues of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

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It is unfortunate that given those established convictions, the futile attempts made to impose a unipolar global order in the last 30 years or so, in particular the crisis spawned in current times aimed at reviving defunct alliances and military blocs, are increasingly pushing our global community towards the precipice of a much more perilous catastrophe.

Moreover, the continued resort to the application of illegal unilateral sanctions, unwarranted interventions and the use or threat of use of force remain characteristic of that hegemonic order. The lessons drawn so far and the continued vigorous and persistent resistance have proved to us that a fundamental and transformative reform that embraces the reality of a new world order is imminent. Such reforms need to be cemented by far-reaching structural changes in the global security and governance architecture as well as the relevant international and regional organizations.

Turning to the field of nuclear disarmament, the lack of meaningful progress is indeed of serious concern. All responsible parties need to demonstrate genuine determination to move the international security and disarmament agenda forward. Meanwhile, peace and security are threatened not only by nuclear weapons but also by conventional weapons as well as the proliferation, transfer and circulation of elite small arms and light weapons, which have been the major instrument for destruction in developed and developing countries alike.

In addition, other weapons of mass destruction, including chemical, biological and toxin weapons, are posing a threat to international security. The use or threat of use of nuclear weapons is illegal and immoral. Legally binding negative assurances, the establishment of nuclear-free zones, the universalization of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons are crucial steps towards complete denuclearization.

Disarmament and non-proliferation on the one hand and the peaceful use of nuclear energy on the other should also be appropriately addressed. It is the inalienable right of all States to develop all aspects of nuclear science and technology for peaceful use without any discrimination, consistent with the obligations of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. The free, unimpeded and non-discriminatory transfer of nuclear technology for peaceful purposes must be fully respected. In that regard, the International Atomic Energy Agency's increased output and assistance to

developing countries in the field of nuclear power, nuclear safety and security, as well as nuclear technology application, are commendable.

In closing, as we all agree, the gravity of the interlocking problems with which humankind is grappling are immense and warrant urgent and comprehensive remedial measures. The resources and technological know-how at our disposal cannot be underestimated in our resolve to bring about an inclusive, just and peaceful world order. We must ensure that our deliberations are genuine, go beyond political bickering and are aimed at achieving consensual outcomes.

Mr. Ndong Mba (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like to congratulate you, Mr. Chair, and all the members of the Bureau on your election to head the First Committee, and we assure you of the support of our delegation.

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) and by the representative of the Federal Republic of Nigeria on behalf of the Group of African States (A/C.1/78/PV.3).

Today Africa continues to confront challenges and threats that require effective commitments. In spite of the progress achieved to date, significant challenges remain to be addressed. One of them is the lack of sincerity and will of many of the countries that manufacture weapons and munitions with regard to their responsibilities concerning the illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons and other conventional weapons that fuel wars in Africa.

For many developed countries, Africa remains first and foremost a market. Even though it may be poor and seemingly marginal, it is a global weapons market. It is a continent where often older weapons are recycled that originate from developed countries' military arsenals that are undergoing renovation, although newer weapons and materials are also sold.

The current rivalry between various power blocs is also contributing to increasing the arms trade in Africa. On the one hand, some Powers are associated with African States as clients, selling or donating weapons and providing military assistance to legitimate Governments. Other Powers, however, assist and illegally trade with rebel groups that operate in areas where instability reigns in order to carry out attacks against Governments.

The illicit trade in small arms and light weapons is due also to the absence of legislation and the inadequate implementation of existing regulations and legislative frameworks in various countries of Africa and developing countries, as well as insufficient capacities for their control or flexibility vis-à-vis such control on the part of some developed countries, because they prioritize the business activities of their companies that sell small arms and light weapons and conventional weapons over exports that respect international law and security.

These various factors, either individually or in combination, pose a serious threat to peace, security, stability and sustainable development in many regions of the world, particularly in Africa.

In order to address those challenges, the international community has adopted at the regional level a series of politically binding treaties and instruments, including the United Nations Firearms Protocol; the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects; the International Tracing Instrument; the Arms Trade Treaty; and the Central African Convention for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons, Their Ammunition and All Parts and Components That Can Be Used for Their Manufacture, Repair and Assembly.

Other such treaties and instruments include the Brazzaville Programme of Priority Activities for the implementation in Central Africa of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects; the Non-Aggression Pact; the Mutual Assistance Pact; and the Protocol relative to the Council for Peace and Security in Central Africa.

All those instruments were established to prevent such violations by establishing norms on the responsible transfer of weapons and promoting transparency. The Republic of Equatorial Guinea has adhered to most of those instruments and seeks to implement them in good faith, and we encourage those countries that have not yet done so yet to adhere to them.

Various parts of the African continent, especially the Sahel, are facing the consequences of the flow of weapons and foreign fighters from other areas of the continent. Land borders in Africa are a point of vulnerability that terrorist groups know how to exploit, especially given the situation created in Libya in 2011.

Most terrorist groups operating in Central and West Africa and the Sahel, including the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham and those affiliated with Al-Qaida, seem to be focused on conducting asymmetric attacks against regional governmental forces and the most vulnerable civilian targets. Many of them are involved in the trafficking of persons, drug trafficking and kidnapping for ransom. Africa has become a key battlefield for terrorism, with a significant increase in the number of active groups operating on the continent.

Over the past 15 years, the countries of the Gulf of Guinea basin have also been dealing with maritime piracy. The region has become one of the most dangerous areas of the world for navigation, and criminals are increasingly better equipped to attack ships that are well supplied with goods of all kinds many kilometres from the coast. In spite of the efforts made to counter that phenomenon, that security problem persists.

The levels of maritime insecurity not only compromise economic prospects for the region, threatening maritime commerce and the stability of coastal States, but also could also be aggravated by proximity to the Sahel and to terrorism.

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is a milestone in nuclear disarmament and the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. For the Treaty to maintain its credibility, States parties must urgently make significant progress in their nuclear disarmament plans, in particular by implementing article VI. In spite of the lack of agreement at the most recent NPT Review Conferences, that regime remains valid, and my country will continue promoting it together with other related international legal instruments.

The NPT and the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons are complementary and mutually reinforcing. Both are critical elements of the broader nuclear disarmament architecture aimed at bringing about a world free of nuclear weapons. We hope that the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty will enter into force as soon as possible, and, in the meantime, its universalization must continue by means of decisive steps aimed at preserving and raising awareness of its ultimate goal.

We reiterate that the only effective way to avert the appalling impact of nuclear weapons, whether accidental or intentional, is their total elimination in a verifiable, transparent and irreversible manner. In the meantime, nuclear-weapon States must provide

universal, legally binding, unconditional and non-discriminatory guarantees that they will not use or threaten the use of nuclear weapons against States that do not possess them, as well as among the nuclear States themselves, under any circumstance, and must set a deadline for their general and complete internationally verifiable disarmament.

Mr. Alrowaiei (Bahrain) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank you, Sir, and sincerely congratulate you on your assumption of the chairmanship of the First Committee. We have full trust in your successful conduct of the work of the Committee.

I align myself with the statement made by the representative of the sisterly Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan on behalf of the Group of Arab States, as well as that made by the representative of the Republic of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/78/PV.2).

The work of the First Committee is of great importance, especially given that it tackles issues of disarmament and international security. It is also a prominent international forum that contributes to achieving consensus on issues relating to the maintenance of regional and international peace and security, given the increasing challenges and escalating conflicts and crises throughout the world.

The Kingdom of Bahrain attaches great importance to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), which represents the cornerstone of international efforts aimed at stopping the spread of nuclear weapons and promoting nuclear disarmament. It stresses the need for cooperation for the peaceful use of nuclear energy.

The Kingdom of Bahrain reiterates the right of Member States to the peaceful use of nuclear technology, especially in the areas of health, education, environment and clean energy, which are part and parcel of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Kingdom of Bahrain also stresses the need to promote the safety and security of nuclear systems by applying the necessary safeguards.

The Kingdom of Bahrain reiterates its steadfast position in support of establishing a zone free from nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East, which would contribute to maintaining regional and international peace and security in line with

the resolution adopted at the 1995 Review Conference (NPT/CONF.1995/32 (Part I), annex), which will remain valid until it is implemented and its objectives attained.

The Kingdom of Bahrain looks forward to its active participation in the fourth session of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction, to be held in November under the presidency of our sisterly State of Libya. We also stress the importance of continuing efforts to ensure that the Middle East, including the Arab Gulf area, is a zone free from weapons of mass destruction. In that respect, we call for the full cooperation of the Islamic Republic of Iran with the International Atomic Energy Agency.

The Kingdom of Bahrain stresses the importance of international cooperation in the area of modern and developed technologies, especially in relation to drones. That would prevent them from falling into the hands of terrorist groups and being used in hostile actions posing a serious threat to regional and international peace and stability.

The world is witnessing rapid progress concerning information and communications technology in the context of international security. The Kingdom of Bahrain looks forward to the use of such technology for peaceful purposes to ensure that humankind's best interests are served. We would also note the importance of the reports of the Group of Governmental Experts and the Open-ended Working Group on Security of and in the Use of Information and Communications Technologies 2021-2025 aimed at reaching international consensus on the most important issues related to cybersecurity.

At the national level, the Kingdom of Bahrain attaches great importance to cybersecurity as one of the main pillars of the Kingdom's technical system. It protects our infrastructure against electronic threats based on a clear system of cybersecurity governance supported by a national comprehensive strategy, including the national cybersecurity centre.

The Kingdom of Bahrain reiterates the contents of the recent report issued by the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs on awareness-raising and capacity-building related to ensuring the long-term sustainability of outer space activities and their use for peaceful purposes. Outer space must be used for peaceful purposes and kept free of any arms race, in line with the principles of United Nations treaties on outer space affairs.

In conclusion, the Kingdom of Bahrain reaffirms its full resolve and commitment to coordinating and working with United Nations organs and Member States on all matters of disarmament and non-proliferation, proceeding from our belief in the need to promote efforts aimed at maintaining international peace and security.

Mr. Utebaev (Kyrgyzstan): Let me join other speakers and congratulate you, Sir, on your election as the Chair of the First Committee. You have the full support of my delegation during your chairmanship. I also congratulate the members of the Bureau on their election.

Given the current complex realities, the United Nations, the universal international decision-making centre on the most important global issues, is once again being tested for its strength and viability. It is time for all Member States to reaffirm their commitments to multilateralism as an effective mechanism for overcoming global challenges and threats.

One effective measure to enhance the activities of the United Nations is the strengthening of the role of the General Assembly by reinforcing of the work of the main committees. In that regard, the First Committee faces a number of very important tasks, the discharge of which will ensure peace and stability throughout the world.

As the President of Kyrgyzstan, Sadyr Zhaparov, underlined in his statement during the general debate of the General Assembly (see A/78/PV.5), Kyrgyzstan strongly supports the United Nations as the only universal international Organization mandated by all Member States to find solutions to the challenges and threats that are constantly arising.

Kyrgyzstan, as one of the initiators and depositaries of the Treaty on the nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia and its Protocol on negative security assurances, supports the strengthening and development of the existing international regime for the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Kyrgyzstan will continue to work for the speedy entry into force of the Protocol as well as the institutional development of the Central Asian zone and the expansion of its cooperation with other nuclear-free zones.

Kyrgyzstan, as a candidate for non-permanent membership in the Security Council for the period 2027-2028 and being committed to maintaining peace and preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, has identified the promotion of education and raising awareness thereof as one of the priorities for membership in the Security Council.

In the context of resolution 77/51, adopted last December, declaring 5 March the International Day for Disarmament and Non-Proliferation Awareness, my country will continue to promote issues relating to raising awareness of disarmament and non-proliferation as a tool for ensuring the achievement of peace and prosperity.

International terrorism and violent extremism continue to pose a real threat to international security. Kyrgyzstan is committed to the full implementation of the updated joint Plan of Action for the Implementation of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in Central Asia. My country is making a significant contribution to the implementation of global measures aimed at preserving and strengthening the existing international drug-control system, and it recognizes the unprecedented progress made in the development and use of the information and communication technologies that shape the global information space and their growing influence on everyday life.

Kyrgyzstan reaffirms its commitment to developing and fostering multilateral cooperation on information security and is actively engaged in the work of the Open-ended Working Group on Security of and in the Use of Information and Communications Technologies 2021-2025. We also recognize the importance of the efforts of the States Members of the United Nations in the fight against cybercrime and its development through the efforts of the Ad Hoc Committee to Elaborate a Comprehensive International Convention on Countering the Use of Information and Communications Technologies for Criminal Purposes.

In this digital age, the future development of humankind will be influenced by the rapid spread of artificial intelligence (AI) technology throughout the world. Therefore, we must ensure a responsible future for AI today. AI regulation must be the shared responsibility of Governments, the private sector, international organizations, academia and other stakeholders. In that regard, we are advocating for the development, under the auspices of the United Nations, of an action plan on artificial intelligence and for the creation of a framework for its safe use and guarantees of transparency and accountability for the benefit of all, in accordance with the recommendations of the High-level Panel on Digital Cooperation.

We consider the reinforcement of the international nuclear non-proliferation regime and its foundation, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons,

as a most important goal. The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty is one of the most fundamental and effective international instruments in nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. We firmly support the importance and urgency of the prevention of an arms race in outer space and the promotion of its use for peaceful purposes only.

We once again reaffirm the central role of the United Nations in the field of disarmament and recognize the important contributions that can be made by civil society, academia and the media. We also welcome the growing emphasis on the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons. My delegation attaches great importance to the issue of mitigating the environmental consequences of uranium mining, including the remediation of uranium legacy sites and the socioeconomic development of settlements located near those sites.

In that regard, we will continue to advocate for the establishment of an international association of cities and towns with uranium legacy sites, which could become a mechanism for permanent interaction on the issue of the socioeconomic and environmental development of such cities and towns.

From the very beginning of its membership, Kyrgyzstan has firmly and consistently observed and protected the generally recognized goals and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. Kyrgyzstan has always striven to resolve international disputes peacefully and through political and diplomatic means.

To overcome existing differences and ensure dialogue among Member States, the United Nations should be used more widely as the most inclusive platform for diplomacy. Kyrgyzstan stands for the promotion of principles such as trust, solidarity and universality in relations among States and for the building of a multilateral system adapted to the changing geopolitical landscape in the world. The United Nations must once again become the leading centre of global conflict resolution, helping Member States to resolve disputes peacefully.

Mr. Fernandes (Mozambique): As I am taking the floor for the first time at this session, I wish to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as Chair of the First Committee of the General Assembly at its seventy-eighth session and to assure you of our full support.

Mozambique aligns itself with 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 by the representative of Nigeria on behalf of the Group of African States (see A/C.1/78/PV.3). We would like to make some additional remarks in our national capacity.

Mozambique is concerned by the rapid deterioration of the international security situation, and we urge a closer look by all at the danger that weapons of mass destruction pose to all humankind. It is unfortunate that we are continuing to witness the abandonment of the path to the total elimination of nuclear weapons. It is also regrettable that the two latest Review Conferences of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons have failed, and we hope that the next Review Conference, scheduled for next year, will yield a compromise aimed at making the world safer and more predictable.

States possessing nuclear weapons are expected to commit themselves to eliminating their entire nuclear arsenals, thereby contributing to the realization of the aspiration to a world without nuclear weapons. We also call for the full implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on their Destruction and the Convention on the Prohibition of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction.

As a party to the Arms Trade Treaty, Mozambique stresses the need for the vigorous observance of the marking, registration and traceability standards of small arms and light weapons, including the effective management of stocks and their ammunition, with a view to reducing the threat that those weapons pose to innocent civilian populations.

Mozambique reaffirms the importance of the Pelindaba Treaty — the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty — which prohibits research on and the development, manufacture, storage, acquisition, testing, possession, control or stockpiling of nuclear weapons, as well as the dumping of radioactive waste on the African continent.

In conclusion, Mozambique remains fully committed to implementing all disarmament-related treaties and conventions.

Ms. Koumba Pambo (Gabon) (*spoke in French*): I wish to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the chairmanship of the First Committee and to assure you of my delegation's full support.

My country 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) and by the representative of Nigeria on behalf of the Group of African States (see A/C.1/78/PV.3).

Today's global security context is bleak. The proliferation of conventional weapons and nuclear weapons reflects the consistent deterioration of the international security situation. Wars, terrorism and the militarization of new technologies all represent challenges that make it imperative for each Member of the United Nations to re-embrace the shared goals set out in the areas of disarmament, non-proliferation and international security. We must persevere in our efforts and our collective commitment towards disarmament by focusing on the implementation of bilateral and multilateral instruments such as the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the cornerstone of the multilateral disarmament architecture.

It goes without saying that international peace and security require dialogue and the restoration of mutual trust among nations. We will continue to support efforts towards the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones. Africa set a good example by adopting the Pelindaba Treaty in 1996, making Africa a nuclear-weapon-free zone. We encourage other regions to take such positive steps.

The events that have been taking place for several days in the Middle East are a reminder of the extreme fragility and volatility of our collective security. The inability of the tenth Review Conference of the Parties to the NPT to adopt an outcome document and the recurrent failures experienced with respect to draft resolutions calling for a substantial reduction in nuclear arsenals and the maintenance of a commitment to disarmament are of particular concern.

We deplore the lack of will on the part of certain States as concerns nuclear disarmament. Those States continue to fine-tune their arsenals in breach of the NPT, despite the fact that nuclear weapons are among the most destructive ones ever created by humankind. Their use in conflict is liable to have irreparable consequences in several respects.

There is an urgent need to reduce military spending in order to provide the resources necessary to meet climate-related, health-related and humanitarian challenges, as well to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

Gabon calls for stepped-up tracing procedures for small arms and light weapons and their ammunition, which fuel the activities of numerous terrorist groups and gangs as well as escalate the violence in several parts of the world.

Another critical component of international security is the preservation of outer space. Outer space has become vital for communications, monitoring and military activities. We must work together to prevent its unbridled militarization and to promote the use of its resources for peaceful purposes. The protection of outer space is in the interest of not only each nation but also of all humankind. We must work together to develop international regulations preventing an arms race in outer space by ensuring that it is used for peaceful purposes that are beneficial to all.

We must cooperate to build a safer world free of nuclear threats, preserving outer space and respecting international commitments. We can build a future in which international security is a reality shared by all.

To conclude, we call upon all members of the international community to shoulder their responsibility and to step up their commitment to peace throughout the world. That requires prioritizing cooperation over confrontation, because we have the lofty responsibility of leaving a better world for succeeding generations.

Ms. Luna (Dominican Republic) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to chair the First Committee, as well as the other members of the Bureau.

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

The Dominican Republic condemns and expresses its strongest rejection of the attack carried out by Hamas against the people of Israel, in which so many innocent lives were lost, including those of women and children. We echo the Secretary-General's call to seek a solution to the vicious circle of violence and polarization, with the aim of achieving a lasting peace in the Middle East.

There can be no doubt that the international context is replete with uncertainty and complexity, with a broad range of threats that day after day undermine any possibility of equitable human progress and make ever more elusive an international peace that would put us on the path to stability, peaceful coexistence and sustainable development. It seems that for some, the only response in the face of that reality is to perpetuate the violence with the continual increase in military expenditures, the possession and modernization of nuclear arsenals and the use of technology for military purposes. We categorically reject those dangerous trends.

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), as the cornerstone of the non-proliferation and disarmament regime, requires the balanced implementation of its three pillars without any distinctions or preconditions, particularly the obligations contained in its article VI, with a view to the elimination of nuclear arsenals as well as compliance with the recommendations emanating from its Review Conferences, which remain valid.

In addition, we would like to stress the need for nuclear-weapon States to provide unequivocal guarantees not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States under any circumstance.

Aware of the disastrous humanitarian consequences of the use of nuclear weapons and recalling that no State or international organization has the capacity or the tools to deal with an atomic explosion, be it intentional or accidental, we reiterate our firm conviction that the only guarantee against their use is their prohibition and complete elimination. That is why we continue to encourage States that have not yet done so to accede to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons with a view to its universalization.

We also welcome the conclusions of the First Meeting of States Parties to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and the Vienna Declaration and Plan of Action, and we hope that the Second Meeting will have a successful outcome.

The illicit traffic of small arms and light weapons and their ammunition and their broad availability and excessive stockpiling worsen tensions and offer a platform for the violation of international human rights norms, undermine stability and perpetuate violence and conflict. International cooperation and capacity-building must be the main instruments in

the combat to eradicate the illicit traffic of small arms and light weapons and their ammunition. We have an unequivocal commitment to the international instruments aimed at combating that scourge, and we welcome with satisfaction the progress achieved in the Open-ended Working Group to Elaborate a Set of Political Commitments as a New Global Framework that will Address Existing Gaps in Through-life Ammunition Management, with the recent adoption of the Global Framework for Through-life Conventional Ammunition Management (resolution 78/47), which had been a longstanding challenge.

On another note, we would like to stress that capacity-building is ever more relevant in the face of growing risks associated with emerging technologies, especially for developing States. It is essential that we enhance mechanisms aimed at minimizing existing gaps and training needs so as to allow States to develop training and capacity-building programmes.

We welcome the work of the Open-ended Working Group on Security of and in the Use of Information and Communications Technologies 2021-2025 and the adoption of the document containing the second progress report (see A/78/265).

Returning to the topic with which I began my statement, our duty as members of the Assembly and in particular of the First Committee is to make it possible to truly strive for a more secure world in the current context and for future generations, and it is therefore essential for us to work together and in good faith towards that overarching objective.

Mr. Alajmi (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): In my own capacity and on behalf of the State of Kuwait's permanent delegation, I would like to begin by congratulating you, Mr. Chair, and the members of the Bureau on your election to the steer the work of the First Committee. We assure you of the full support of my country's delegation in your efforts to ensure the success of the Committee's work during this session. We are confident that your proven expertise and wisdom will be of great help to you in managing the Committee well.

My country's delegation aligns itself with the statements delivered by the representative of the sisterly Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan on behalf of the Group of Arab States and by the representative of the friendly Republic of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/78/PV.2).

During the past two weeks, we have heard statements in the general debate of the First Committee. Despite the differences of view that have been expressed, nonetheless everyone appears to be in agreement that the challenges are many and the geopolitical changes pose a threat to international peace and security. Furthermore, we are witnessing an alarming arms race with global ramifications, and no one is safe from that threat.

The State of Kuwait reiterates its firm position on the importance of multilateral action as the best way to counter challenges related to disarmament and non-proliferation and to promote the relevant forms of international cooperation, under the auspices of the United Nations and various disarmament mechanisms. We believe that we all must make efforts to achieve our optimal common goal, namely, general and complete disarmament. It is the desire of humankind to ensure genuine peace and security and eliminate the threat of war as well as to allocate human, economic, intellectual and other resources to peaceful purposes.

For that reason, we welcome any significant progress made in the area of disarmament. We are also concerned about any failure in the implementation of agreed obligations and the deliberate and ongoing disregard for the repeated calls of the international community to achieve universal accession to the various related treaties and conventions, beginning with the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). We believe that the only and best way to ensure non-use of nuclear weapons is to totally eliminate them.

The State of Kuwait deplores the fact that two consecutive Review Conferences of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons failed to issue an outcome document — the ninth Conference, in 2015, and the tenth Conference, in 2020. From this rostrum, we call on all Member States to make concerted efforts, without any politicization, and to seriously and constructively work to bring viewpoints closer together about the challenges that we face in order to arrive at common solutions leading to a final, comprehensive and balanced outcome document at the upcoming eleventh Review Conference.

My country welcomed the holding of the first session of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear and Other Weapons

of Mass Destruction, in 2019, under the successful and productive chairmanship of the sisterly Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, during which a number of thematic and procedural decisions were taken.

Furthermore, my country chaired the second session of the Conference, and we made progress in terms of the adoption of rules of procedure for the Conference and the establishment of an informal working group tasked with pursuing inter-sessional consultations. Moreover, we succeeded in adopting a final report. That reflects the great importance that the State of Kuwait attaches to that issue, which requires the pooling of international efforts and the surmounting of marginal issues in order to establish a safer world for all humankind.

I wish to take this opportunity to mention the successful third session, held under the chairmanship of the sisterly Lebanese Republic. We look forward eagerly to the fourth session of the Conference, under the chairmanship of the sisterly State of Libya, with a view to continuing the constructive discussions begun at the three previous sessions.

We need to recall in that regard that the resolution adopted at the 1995 Review Conference, on the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East (NPT/CONF.1995/32(Part I), annex), remains part and parcel of the indefinite extension of the NPT.

We urge those countries that have particular responsibility as sponsors of the 1995 resolution, along with other countries of the region that did not participate in the session, to reconsider their positions and to participate in the process, which has not excluded any party or imposed any preconditions. It is an irreversible process aimed at achieving the desired goal, and there should be no compromise in that regard. It will help to enhance trust in the region and will spare its countries the threats related to nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. The process will also help to strengthen the international disarmament and non-proliferation regime, improve and enhance relations among States, and establish security and stability at the regional and international levels, along with facilitating and encouraging cooperation in the area of nuclear energy and its use for peaceful purposes.

The Chair: The full statement of the representative of Kuwait will be reflected in the e-deleGATE portal.

Mr. Da Cruz (Angola): My delegation joins previous speakers in congratulating you, Mr. Chair, and the members of the Bureau on your election. You have the trust and support of the Angolan delegation.

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

The First Committee has the vital role of advancing the international peace and security agenda as humankind continues to face multiple and complex crises. Effective multilateralism is crucial to addressing common concerns such as disarmament, non-proliferation and international security in accordance with the principles and objectives enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and international law.

Nuclear weapons represent a growing threat to humankind and the environment. Therefore, States should not continue to increase or improve their nuclear arsenals, as that poses a greater danger to our collective security.

Angola advocates the principle of complete nuclear disarmament as a precondition for maintaining international peace and security. We believe that the achievement of the goal of the total elimination of nuclear weapons depends on the commitment of all nuclear-weapon States to continually reduce and finally dismantle their stocks of nuclear weapons.

We would recall that resolution 70/34 underscores the importance of multilateral disarmament efforts in the pursuit of a safer world for all. We strongly believe that nuclear disarmament and the total elimination of nuclear weapons remain the only absolute guarantee against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons.

We underscore the importance of continued respect for the inalienable right to the peaceful use of nuclear energy. In that respect, we stress that the International Atomic Energy Agency must continue to play its role in promoting dialogue and consultation on nuclear safety, providing technical support and maximizing the use of science and technology for socioeconomic development.

Angola is strongly committed to the eradication of nuclear weapons. My country ratified the Treaty of Pelindaba, which reaffirms the status of Africa as a nuclear-weapon-free zone. Angola has also ratified the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons,

whose objective is to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons worldwide. Both international instruments are fundamental to addressing nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation across all regions of the world. We believe that strengthening existing nuclear-weapon-free zones and creating others is crucial to achieving a world free from nuclear weapons.

We recognize that the use of small arms and light weapons is a sovereign right of States to ensure their self-defence and national security needs. However, the illicit trade in conventional arms and ammunition, their diversion to non-State actors and their excessive accumulation and uncontrolled dissemination in many regions of the world, especially in Africa, have profound destabilizing effects, fuelling conflicts, violent crimes and terrorism.

We remain committed to the implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects.

Angola is a peacemaking, peacebuilding and peace-loving country. At the core of its international policy lies the principle of the peaceful settlement of disputes and the promotion of international peace and security. In recognition thereof, the African Union in May 2022 named the President of Angola, His Excellency João Manuel Gonçalves Lourenço, African Union Champion for Peace and Reconciliation.

During the high-level debate of the General Assembly, the President of Angola reaffirmed his unwavering commitment to peace, saying:

“The Republic of Angola has sought to contribute its experience in terms of peacebuilding, harmony and national reconciliation to the resolution of conflicts on the African continent” (see A/78/PV.6, p.38).

To conclude, we urge Member States to demonstrate political will and commitment to the principle of transparency in dealing with international disarmament and security issues. To that end, Angola stands ready to work with the First Committee and all stakeholders to advance the global disarmament agenda.

Ms. Romualdo (Cabo Verde): As this is the first time that Cabo Verde is taking the floor, we would like to congratulate you, Mr. Chair, and your team members on your election to preside over the work of the First Committee during the seventy-eighth session

of the General Assembly and to wish you success in the accomplishment of your hard work; we reaffirm Cabo Verde's total support. We also take this opportunity to thank your predecessor and his team for their work during the previous session.

Cabo Verde aligns itself with the statements made by the Permanent Representative of Nigeria, on behalf of the Group of African States (see A/C.1/78/PV.3), and by the Permanent Representative of Indonesia, on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/78/PV.2). However, allow us a few words at a national level.

The world is going through a terrible and very turbulent time. Disarmament is essential to guaranteeing international peace and security, but it depends mostly on the few countries that have 90 per cent of the nuclear weapons in the world. We deplore and condemn the use of weapons that continue to cause the loss of human lives, especially those of civilians.

Cabo Verde is a peaceful country and a non-nuclear-weapon State. Nevertheless, it is a party to the main disarmament treaties, namely, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the Treaty of Pelindaba, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), which was signed on the date it was opened for signature, that is, 20 September 2017.

In conducting its foreign policy, Cabo Verde has excelled in fulfilling the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, especially those that aim to guarantee international peace and security and avert the catastrophic humanitarian consequences that would result from any use of nuclear weapons.

Conflicts must be resolved by peaceful means, in accordance with Chapter VI, Article 33, of the Charter of the United Nations, and through the abolition of nuclear weapons, which is the best way to prevent their use. Only effective disarmament can guarantee international peace and security. The ratification of the CTBT and the TPNW by additional States is therefore vital to ensuring their entry into force.

In strict compliance with its constitutional principles regarding international law and international relations, Cabo Verde actively engages in cooperative endeavours with the international organizations to which it belongs, especially the United Nations and the African Union. Cabo Verde signs, adheres and ratifies

the most structuring international treaties in this area and thereby contributes to ensuring peace and security at the regional and global levels.

To contribute to the universalization of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), with a view to attaining disarmament, Cabo Verde has been making efforts to implement the Treaty's article 12. In April 2023, Cabo Verde succeeded Uruguay as president of the South Atlantic Peace and Cooperation Zone (ZPCSA), established in 1986 by resolution 41/11. The outcome of the eighth Ministerial Meeting, namely, the Declaration of Mindelo, in its paragraphs 19 to 36, addresses the issue of disarmament. It also expresses ZPCSA's commitment to becoming free from nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, exhorts other States to ratify the TPNW and, furthermore, calls for the creation of more zones of peace and cooperation free from nuclear weapons.

Last but not least, we wish to share that the Government of Cabo Verde firmly condemns the Hamas attack against Israel and regrets the escalation of the conflict, with the woeful loss of a high number of human lives among which there are many civilians. We hope that through diplomatic negotiations, peace and security can soon be restored in the region.

Mr. Pereira Sosa (Paraguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation congratulates you on your election, Mr. Chair, and wishes you every success in leading the work of the First Committee. It also extends its congratulations to the other members of the Bureau, particularly the distinguished representative of Uruguay. They can count on our support in the work of this session.

My delegation also associates itself with the statement made by the representative of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines on behalf of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) (see A/C.1/78/PV.3).

The current international security situation requires us to continue to work towards complete general disarmament. In that regard, Paraguay reaffirms its commitment to the United Nations and adds its voice to the broad majority of countries that want peace, the cessation of hostilities, respect for international law and the path of dialogue, diplomacy and negotiation to prevail. We are convinced that these are the best tools to achieve peace in so many of the conflicts happening in the world.

The point of departure for the Republic of Paraguay's approach to international affairs is that, beyond the legitimate differences that characterize us, we must collaborate in the search for common paths. It is inadmissible that military spending continues to increase when there are so many needs in a world immersed in serious humanitarian crises that affect above all the most vulnerable sectors of our societies, especially women, children and the elderly.

The revival of the security model based on deterrence and the threat of the use of nuclear weapons are extremely worrisome. What for some is synonymous with security represents just the opposite for the vast majority — a latent risk that puts the security and well-being of present and future generations in jeopardy. The only guarantee we will have against the use of nuclear weapons is their total prohibition and elimination in a transparent, verifiable and irreversible manner within a defined period of time.

Latin America and the Caribbean, through CELAC and the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean, reaffirm our support for the Treaty of Tlatelolco and therefore for a nuclear-weapon-free zone on a continent of peace. We believe that the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons is the cornerstone of the disarmament, non-proliferation and peaceful-use-of-nuclear-energy regime, which has been refined and complemented within the international disarmament architecture by the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). However, as a region, we have noted and regretted that, to date, the CTBT has not entered into force. We therefore urge the States listed in annex 2 of the Treaty to ratify it promptly, so that it may fully enter into force. Accordingly, Paraguay recognizes the regional efforts undertaken in this regard, namely, the declarations on nuclear-weapon-free zones, and believes that it is possible to coexist in a world without nuclear weapons.

My delegation would like to address transnational organized crime in all its manifestations because it continues to pose a threat to the stability of entire regions and to global security. Its multiplying impact undermines the foundations of our institutions and societies. Closely linked to the foregoing, the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, their parts and components and, of course, their ammunition, cannot be viewed as separate from this equation. This despicable scourge, which does not discriminate as to whether the illicit trade and diversion of weapons to

non-State actors or unauthorized users takes place in armed-conflict zones or for criminal purposes, while causing destabilization and affecting development, has a particularly worrisome impact on women and children, and is also a breeding ground for other types of related transnational crimes.

Therefore, the obligations and commitments with regard to conventional ammunition should have a central place in our discussions, highlighting the work of the Open-ended Working Group established pursuant to resolution 76/233 to come up with a set of political commitments as a new global framework that will address existing gaps in through-life ammunition management, and we endorse its annual progress report. Paraguay echoes what has been stated by several countries of the Global South with regard to the need for assistance and cooperation, technology transfer, capacity-building and know-how, as it is crucial that our countries address this problem that causes so much harm to society.

Paraguay highlights the work carried out since 2021 by the Open-ended Working Group on security of and in the use of information and communications technologies 2021–2025 and takes the liberty of highlighting the efforts and commitment of the delegations. In particular, we would like to give special acknowledgement to the Chair and the working team from the Singaporean delegation. The road to this point has not been easy, and there is still much to be done. It is crucially important that we make progress in building mechanisms that contribute to the full and effective implementation of the outcomes of other initiatives that preceded the current Working Group and that in fact serve as a basis for our present work. Those initiatives, which have served as a bridge, are action-oriented, and build confidence and the capacities that are so necessary for our countries.

Similarly, my country promotes the exclusively peaceful use of cyberspace. In this regard, it recognizes that international law, including international humanitarian law, applies to cyberspace, and therefore rejects any cyberattack, especially when critical infrastructure is put at risk, regardless of its origin. At the same time, my country expresses its concern about a possible arms race in outer space, taking into account that that could be a potential destabilizing factor for international relations, increasing the risks of military confrontations and negatively affecting peaceful exploration.

Paraguay condemns the use of any weapon with indiscriminate effects, scientific and commercial advances in artificial intelligence and the use of technology for the development of new armaments.

We live in times that demand concrete political commitments and not generic attitudes. Our peoples expect answers from us. Let us hope that we can live up to this exceptional moment in our history. The First Committee can count on Paraguay's firm commitment to that end.

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

Archbishop Caccia (Holy See): My delegation congratulates you, Mr. Chair, on your election and would like to assure you of its full support during this session.

As the world experiences a third world war fought piecemeal and as the threat of nuclear war returns, the world once more feels fear and anguish. Pope Francis has warned us that we cannot resign ourselves to this scenario. Amid this paucity of hope, we need the audacity of peace, which moves beyond a cold realism, partisan considerations and narrow, strategic approaches that have failed to make peace a reality.

Achieving peace requires the international community to reject war as a means of Statecraft once and for all. In its place, the international community must ceaselessly work to foster a just peace — one that is stable and lasting, built not on the precarious balance of deterrence, but on the fraternity that unites us.

First and foremost, rejecting deterrence means eliminating nuclear weapons, which offer only an illusion of peace. While this illusion has maintained enduring appeal, it is important to recall that the widespread use of nuclear weapons, with their catastrophic humanitarian and environmental consequences, can bring humanity only the dreadful peace of death.

Avoiding such devastation requires a new foundation for the global security infrastructure. In this vein, the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) offers a path forward for building a new security framework that places the dignity of the human person at its centre and upholds the principle of sovereign equality among States.

In the face of regrettable blockage within the review process of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the TPNW offers hope to all that progress

towards a world free from nuclear weapons remains achievable. In the light of this fact, my delegation calls on all States to join the TPNW and to forever renounce the use of atomic energy for the purposes of war.

A world free from nuclear weapons cannot be realized except on the basis of a trust that is sustained and reinforced by verification measures. In this regard, the Holy See commends the verification work undertaken by the International Atomic Energy Agency and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization and expresses hope that the second Meeting of States Parties of the TPNW takes meaningful steps towards laying a foundation for measures to verify the elimination of nuclear weapons.

Moving towards a world free from nuclear weapons necessitates not only a reconsideration of security doctrines and adequate verification measures, but also the provision of assistance to those who have suffered due to the development, production and testing of nuclear weapons, as well as the remediation of environments contaminated by such activities. In this regard, the Holy See looks favourably upon the draft resolution co-sponsored by Kazakhstan and Kiribati, which aims to address the legacy of nuclear weapons (A/C.1/78/L.52). It is the sincere hope of my delegation that all States — especially those that rely on nuclear deterrence — engage constructively in rectifying the injustices spawned by nuclear weapons.

Building a new framework for global peace also calls on the international community to address new and emerging technologies. This means first ensuring that deadly weapons remain only in the hands of humans, who, endowed with individual conscience, alone can ensure that the use of such instruments remains in line with international humanitarian law. Providing machines with the capacity to maim and kill autonomously is not only legally questionable, but also morally abhorrent. In this regard, the Holy See welcomes the Secretary-General's recommendation that States conclude, by 2026, a legally binding instrument to prohibit lethal autonomous weapon systems.

Secondly, States must ensure that dual-use technologies with the potential for mass and indiscriminate destruction remain solely used for peaceful purposes. This is especially urgent for new developments in biotechnology. Given the complexity of this task, it is most welcome that the ninth Review Conference of the Biological Weapons

Convention agreed to establish a working group with a mandate to address international cooperation and assistance, scientific developments and verification. Appropriately addressing these issues will promote the role of biological sciences in the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, while building mutual trust among States.

Thirdly, the international community must avoid fragmentation in managing the security challenges posed by cyberspace. Having adopted two resolutions by vote on this topic during the seventy-seventh session of the General Assembly (resolutions 77/36 and 77/37), the First Committee runs the risk of creating duplicate institutions. Competing forums will undermine efforts to govern cyberspace, while placing a strain on smaller delegations. With that in mind, my delegation calls for renewed determination to return to consensus on this topic.

While emerging technologies confront us with new and potential threats, conventional weapons continue to injure and kill hundreds of thousands of our brothers and sisters worldwide. Expenditures on arms continue to grow to disturbing new heights, increasing the potential severity of conflict and starving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development of much-needed funds. In the light of this, the Holy See calls on all States to reconsider their spending priorities in the interest of promoting a culture of peace and life, rather than one of war and death.

The Chair: I now give the floor to the observer of the Observer State of Palestine.

Mr. Kasabri (Palestine) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Mr. Chair, and the other members of the Bureau for assuming the chairmanship of the First Committee during this session. I assure you, Sir, of the full commitment of Palestine's delegation to ensuring the success of the Committee's work.

The State of Palestine aligns itself with the statements made on behalf of the Group of Arab States and the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/78/PV.2).

The State of Palestine stresses that full adherence to the principles of the United Nations Charter and the provisions of international law, including international humanitarian law, is the basis for stability and security in this world. We therefore reiterate that the possession

of weapons of mass destruction and the use or threat of use of such weapons under any circumstances is a gross violation of the fundamental principles of international law, international humanitarian law and the purposes of the United Nations Charter.

The State of Palestine believes that the only way to eliminate the danger and the threat of weapons of mass destruction, especially nuclear weapons, is to totally eliminate them. We reaffirm that the nuclear-weapon States are entirely responsible for our collective security. They must therefore eradicate all their nuclear weapons without conditions.

We reiterate our deep belief in the importance of multilateralism and its role in making progress in the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime. We are therefore concerned at the failure of the most recent Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), which was unable to adopt an outcome document. Nevertheless, we would like to share a glimmer of hope with the entire world, stressing that there is still a chance to achieve the desired progress by redoubling our efforts and working transparently and with goodwill to ensure the success of the current session of the Review Conference.

The State of Palestine is committed to working regionally and internationally to promote efforts aimed at disarmament of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. In that regard, we reiterate the importance of establishing zones free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, as they contribute to promoting the disarmament and non-proliferation regimes. We must support all efforts aimed at establishing such zones, especially in the Middle East. We are still working hard to establish such a zone by consensus with all the countries of the region, despite Israel's insistence not to attend the relevant conference that constitutes a platform that provides for the participation of all parties and adopts all decisions by consensus.

However, as usual, Israel has chosen to challenge the will of the international community and continues its systematic breach of relevant international resolutions, norms and regulations. It has unequivocally refused to subject its nuclear facilities to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards system, despite all the United Nations resolutions to that end.

We welcome once again the holding of the three sessions of the conference on establishing a Middle East region free from nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction under the presidencies of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, the State of Kuwait and the Lebanese Republic, respectively. We commend all the outcomes of those sessions, including the Working Group, the rules of procedure and their final report. We also welcome the State of Libya's presidency of the fourth session of the conference, which is to be held in November. We wish the Libya every success and assure it of our full support to guarantee the success of the conference.

The State of Palestine has engaged in all efforts aimed at eradicating all weapons of mass destruction, not only through the signing of relevant treaties, such as the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) which is the cornerstone of the disarmament system, but also by contributing to the drafting of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). We call on all parties that have not yet signed the TPNW to accede to it, so as to ensure its universality. The TPNW is a complementary lever for the NPT. Accordingly, we welcome the second Meeting of the State Parties to the TPNW, which is to be held at the end of November. We call on all States, be they members or observers, to participate constructively and effectively in the work of that important meeting.

On another note, we welcome the IAEA General Conference in which the overwhelming majority voted in favour of the draft resolution submitted by the Arab Republic of Egypt on behalf of the State of Palestine, for which we are grateful, to adopt the official designation of "State of Palestine" by the IAEA and grant us more important privileges and rights during the sixty-seventh session of the Conference. That will increase cooperation and coordination between the IAEA and the State of Palestine.

Despite the fact that the weapons of mass destruction represent an existential threat to humankind at large, we must not forget the threat still caused by conventional weapons, especially when States and other parties use them in disregard of the law and international treaties. The State of Palestine therefore calls for concerted efforts aimed at establishing monitoring and tracking mechanisms on the use of such conventional weapons anywhere, in addition to establishing effective mechanisms for deterring their export to State and parties that use them to commit war crimes and crimes against humanity, as Israel, the occupying Power, and its army, are doing right now.

I would like to reiterate the position of the State of Palestine with respect to autonomous weapons systems, which should always be subject to real human control. Indeed, such weapons must be totally banned. Furthermore, all systems designed to be used against humans are morally and legally unacceptable. They must be banned and eliminated. Furthermore, we must control all all-autonomous weapon systems already in place. As called for by the Secretary-General and the President of the International Committee of the Red Cross in their joint appeal last week, all States must start negotiations as soon as possible to reach a legally binding instrument to clearly ban and restrict the use of such autonomous systems.

Turning to outer space, it is important not to violate the principle that outer space is to be used exclusively for peaceful purposes. We have to work to reach a common understanding of States' responsible behaviour. We must prevent an arms race in outer space. Preventing such an arms race must be one of the priorities of all States parties. The State of Palestine supports all efforts aimed at reaching a legally binding instrument that would prevent an arms race in outer space and support the use of space for exclusively peaceful purposes.

The Chair: I now give the floor to the observer of the International Committee of the Red Cross.

Mr. Gisel (International Committee of the Red Cross): The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is grateful for this opportunity to address the First Committee.

Earlier this year, the Secretary-General of the United Nations released *A New Agenda for Peace*, which begins with a realistic assessment of the global security situation we are currently facing. In our work around the world, we see first-hand how the developments highlighted by the this policy document are exacerbating the suffering of victims of armed conflict through the growing risk of the use of nuclear weapons, the terrible impact of war in cities, including the use of heavy explosive weapons, the humanitarian consequences of anti-personnel mines and cluster munitions, inadequately controlled transfers of arms and ammunition, and the role of advanced technologies in warfare.

Nuclear weapons challenge the basic premises of international humanitarian law. Weapons capable of spreading radiation across borders and down generations, causing horrific injuries and untreatable

illness, and poisoning the environment for decades or centuries to come are fundamentally incompatible with the principles of distinction, proportionality and, above all, humanity.

In the light of their catastrophic humanitarian consequences, it is extremely doubtful that nuclear weapons could ever be used in accordance with international humanitarian law. Any use or threat of use is abhorrent to the principles of humanity and the dictates of public conscience.

Today we are witnessing disturbing developments. More than 50 years after the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the risk of the use of nuclear weapons is at its highest since the darkest moments of the Cold War. Nuclear risk-reduction measures and tangible progress towards nuclear disarmament are urgently needed. We call on all States to demonstrate their commitment to a nuclear-weapon-free world by joining, without delay, the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and all other nuclear disarmament treaties.

The unconstrained development and use of autonomous weapon systems presents unacceptable humanitarian, ethical and legal risks that must be addressed today. This is why, last week, the United Nations Secretary-General and the ICRC President issued a joint appeal, calling on political leaders to urgently establish new international law with specific prohibitions and restrictions on autonomous weapon systems. Indeed, human control over the use of force and effects of weapons is required by international humanitarian law, and as our joint appeal emphasizes, the autonomous targeting of humans by machines is a moral line that we must not cross.

Industry, militaries and the general public are increasingly looking to their Governments to demonstrate leadership and provide clarity. This year, we have been encouraged by the growing momentum among States towards going beyond recalling existing legal frameworks to negotiate a legally binding instrument that establishes clear and specific red lines, in which autonomous weapons are prohibited and how other weapons are to be restricted.

Current armed conflicts have demonstrated the growing significance of cyberthreats and other digital threats. Focused exchanges among States on the limits that international humanitarian law imposes on such operations are urgently needed. The long-standing rules

of international humanitarian law serve their purpose only if applied in ways that ensure adequate protection for civilians, civilian infrastructure and civilian data in our increasingly digitalized societies.

An additional matter of concern for us is the growing involvement of civilians — hackers, hacker groups, companies and individuals — in digital operations during armed conflicts. In this regard, I am pleased to announce that next week the ICRC will release a set of four guiding principles and 25 recommendations to protect civilians against digital threats during armed conflicts.

The debates at the Open-Ended Working Group on reducing space threats through norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviours showed the increasing concern over the continued militarization and possible weaponization of outer space. Against this backdrop, I cannot overstate the importance of reaffirming the applicability of relevant international law to outer space, including the United Nations Charter, space treaties, international humanitarian law and the law of neutrality. International humanitarian law, in particular, offers protection for the civilian population on Earth against the effects of hostilities in space. Any development of new rules or voluntary norms must build on existing law.

In 2023, the use of anti-personnel mines and cluster munitions has grown alarmingly, and casualties have spiked dramatically. These weapons kill and maim indiscriminately and continue to cause widespread suffering long after conflicts have ended. Any use of these weapons, anywhere, by anyone, must be condemned. To prevent further victims, we urge all parties to armed conflict to immediately stop using these weapons.

States must exert greater diligence in assessing the risks posed by arms exports and implement timely, robust and practical measures that can realistically offset risks of violations.

The use of heavy explosive weapons in populated areas continues to be a major cause of civilian harm in armed conflict. Death, injury, disability and psychological trauma are often the direct result of this lethal choice. Houses, hospitals, schools and critical infrastructure are damaged or destroyed beyond repair; entire neighbourhoods are turned into rubble.

Against this bleak backdrop, last year saw the adoption of the landmark Political Declaration on Strengthening the Protection of Civilians from the Humanitarian Consequences Arising from the Use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas. We encourage all States to endorse and faithfully implement the Declaration and look forward to the first conference, to be held in Oslo in April 2024.

In conclusion, the ICRC believes that shared humanitarian values and international humanitarian law, together with the prioritization of disarmament, provide the basis for States to take action and address the challenges highlighted in *A New Agenda for Peace*. It is precisely for a deteriorating security context that multilateral disarmament was conceived. The international community must restore the vision of disarmament as a crucial path towards sustainable peace and security. We stand ready to continue assisting the First Committee in its efforts.

The Chair: I now give the floor to the observer of the League of Arab States.

Mr. Abdelaziz (League of Arab States) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me to congratulate you, Mr. Chair, and the members of the Bureau, on your assumption of the chairmanship of the First Committee for this session. We support the statement delivered by the representative of Jordan on behalf of the Group of Arab States (see A/C.1/78/PV.2).

The First Committee is convened today against the backdrop of major risks and threats, a complex international situation, escalating geopolitical polarization linked to the increase in transfers of destructive conventional weapons among States, increasing contradiction between the military doctrines of nuclear States, East and West, and their military, strategic and economic coalitions. Each seeks to expand in order to deter the other, including by repositioning nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. Unfortunately, all of that coincides with the utter failure to implement all nuclear-disarmament commitments, thereby threatening the credibility of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), after all efforts to achieve its universality as a framework for implementing mutual obligations among non-nuclear-weapon States, which still respect and adhere to the NPT, and the nuclear-weapon States, which disregard those obligations, did not come to fruition. This has provoked confrontation in a way that limits the ability

of the international multilateral framework at the United Nations to maintain international peace and security, especially in the light of the link between the possession of nuclear weapons, on the one hand, and the limited permanent membership in the Security Council, on the other.

Some have sought to impose changes in the strategic balance of power, while others have resisted those changes. That has led to an unprecedented degree of international tension and triggered military actions to forcefully occupy the territories of others and the deployment of aircraft carriers, nuclear weapons, and heavy and advanced conventional weapons across borders and continents in support of one conflict party or another. That unfortunate situation coincides with the application of political double standards in which one occupied State receives support and is provided with advanced weapons to defend itself, while a blind eye is turned to the brutal acts of aggression against another people whose land has been occupied for 70 years, ignoring that people's inalienable rights not to be subject to that same military force.

Those developments significantly harm the efforts aimed at disarmament. They also have a negative impact on the international multilateral system, its ability to achieve international peace and security, and the United Nations as a whole. Moreover, those developments are having humanitarian, socioeconomic and political effects that transcend geographical borders and affect many other regions and peoples mostly in developing countries unrelated to those confrontations. Accordingly, the League of Arab States calls for using the First Committee, its deliberations, decisions and mechanisms to relieve the current tensions, particularly between major nuclear Powers and their various military coalitions.

The League of Arab States has always worked towards reaching total and complete disarmament, including nuclear disarmament and other weapons of mass destruction. However, the nuclear Powers have not set any specific time frames to implement international commitments that they have voluntarily agreed to in NPT Review Conferences or their outcome documents, including that of 1995 and its sole resolution specifically on the Middle East contained in the annex to document NPT/CONF.1995/32 (Part I), and those of 2000 and 2010, the latter of which, in section IV of its Action Plan, endorsed the holding, in the context of the NPT, of an international conference for establishing a

nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East in 2012 (NPT/CONF.2010/50). Unfortunately, none of those commitments has been implemented owing to the absence of the necessary political will among nuclear States and the lack of any regulatory framework to follow up on the implementation of what has been agreed on so far.

The failure of the ninth and tenth Review Conferences of the Parties to the NPT to agree on an outcome document has led the Arab States to the holding of the conference agreed to on negotiating the creation of a nuclear-weapon-free zone within the context of the NPT under the auspices of the United Nations. That United conference has had three successful sessions under the presidencies of Jordan, Kuwait and Lebanon, respectively. Nevertheless, Israel, the only State in the region not to have acceded to the NPT and whose nuclear facilities have not been subject to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards system, has remained absent, as have the principal nuclear-weapon State signatories of the NPT, which proposed and adopted the 1995 resolution on the Middle East and agreed to section IV in the outcome document of the 2010 Review Conference, including the holding of the conference.

Despite all of the foregoing, the League of Arab States and its member States remain determined and steadfast in striving for success in the negotiations at the United Nations conference on establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. We will not be deterred in establishing such a zone and having it featured on the agendas of all NPT Review Conferences present and future and of the United Nations itself. The Arab States will continue to present their annual reports to the First Committee with respect to establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East region and the danger of the nuclear proliferation therein. We look forward to having the support of all States in the achievement of our ultimate goal, which is to establish that free zone and achieve the universality of the NPT in the Middle East.

At the same time, the League of Arab States emphasizes the importance of implementing the United Nations Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons, and we support the statement delivered on behalf of the Group of Arab States in that regard.

We also emphasize the importance of strengthening international cooperation in cybersecurity in order to achieve its ultimate objective, which is to combat terrorism and violent extremism that feed on the flow of conventional weapons to terrorists and extremist groups. We welcome the work of the Open-ended Working Group established to that end. The League of Arab States also stresses that outer space must not be turned into a setting for the arms race. Such an arms race must be prevented, just as the development of weapons must be curtailed.

In conclusion, I reiterate the commitment of the League of Arab States and its member States to making the work of the First Committee in this session a success.

Mr. Domico (Brazil) (*spoke in Spanish*): As Coordinator, and given that Ambassador Flávio Roberto Bonzanini, Secretary-General of the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (OPANAL), was unable to be at today's meeting, I shall read his statement.

"Before I begin my remarks, Mr. Chair, allow me to express my sincere congratulations on your recent election to chair the First Committee. Sir, you can count on the full support of the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (OPANAL) in all activities. I would also like to extend my warmest greetings to members of the Bureau and the Secretariat.

"The delegations that have spoken before me have highlighted the complex international context in which the work of the First Committee is taking place — a context that, in addition to being complex, is characterized by widespread acrimony and mistrust, the result of a lack of dialogue and interest in finding lasting solutions based on compromise. It seems we have returned to the years when all initiatives were viewed from a zero-sum perspective, which is paradoxical in the multilateral forum par excellence that is the United Nations.

"Let me therefore recall that in Articles 1 and 2 of the Charter of the United Nations, the Organization's purposes and principles were set out, among them, '[t]o maintain international peace and security, and ... to bring about by peaceful means, and in conformity with the principles of justice and international law, adjustment or settlement of international disputes...' as well as the commitment of its States Members to 'refrain ... from the threat

or use of force ... in any ... manner inconsistent with the purposes of the United Nations', which includes the threat of the use of nuclear weapons.

"States parties to treaties establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones, such as the Treaty of Tlatelolco, have for more than five decades not only been faithful to the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter, but also to the norm outlawing nuclear weapons, which is clearly reflected in every nuclear-demilitarized zone — in Latin America and the Caribbean, in the South Pacific, in Southeast Asia, in Africa and in Central Asia.

"Furthermore, aware that nuclear-weapon-free zones are not an end in themselves, the States that comprise such zones have not lost any of their enterprising spirit when it comes to codifying and developing international law through multilateral diplomacy, convinced that that is the only way to resolve disputes.

"Last 26 September, the international community commemorated the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons. As they have done since the General Assembly established this commemoration in 2013, the 33 States members of OPANAL issued a joint statement that set forth their priorities and concerns regarding nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, including the demand that nuclear weapons not be used again under any circumstances by any actor and that that can only be ensured through the prohibition and complete, transparent, verifiable and irreversible elimination of all nuclear weapons.

"The joint statement also includes a call to the United States, France, the United Kingdom and Russia to continue using the mechanism established this year for dialogue with OPANAL member States to address the issue of their interpretive declarations to the protocols to the Treaty of Tlatelolco. I am certain that through this mechanism, the dialogue opened this year with the four nuclear-weapon States can lead to significant progress towards reaching a lasting and mutually acceptable solution that contributes to providing full and unequivocal security guarantees to the States of the nuclear-weapon-free zone of Latin America and the Caribbean. In this vein, OPANAL member States look forward to continuing to work actively and constructively with each other in multilateral forums dedicated to disarmament and the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons.

"Accordingly, and to conclude my statement, I would like to refer to an initiative negotiated and promoted by the States members of OPANAL, which will be submitted to the First Committee. I refer to the draft resolution entitled 'Comprehensive study of the question of nuclear-weapon-free zones in all its aspects'. I am certain that this initiative promoted by States of our region has the potential to contribute to the full implementation of the principles and objectives of the existing treaties establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones, to the establishment of other zones in regions where they do not exist and, in general, to the strengthening of the norms that they establish".

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

Mr. Ghorbanpour Najafabadi (Islamic Republic of Iran): In answer to a statement made during the general debate by a certain delegation from the Middle East, which addressed Iran through a heavily politicized lens as it obviously avoided any mention of the real proliferator in the region, we wish to underscore that it is not our customary practice to dignify such remarks with a direct response. Nevertheless, we earnestly hope that that respectful delegation can demonstrate a commitment to the basic standards of professionalism in multilateral forums.

In that context, it would be beneficial for it to keep in mind the requirements of good-neighbourliness and respect the fundamental rights of sovereign State members of the international community, including the Islamic Republic of Iran, to make decisions pertaining to their own national security and interests. Furthermore, we encourage it to carefully consider its statements when addressing the First Committee and refrain from delivering statements that run counter to good-neighbourliness and the established norms, rules and principles governing the international community.

Ms. Maayan (Israel): I am compelled to react to a statement that mentioned my country earlier today.

We, representatives of nations from around the world, are all gathered in this conference room to promote international treaties regarding non-proliferation, arms

control, peace and security. Today each of us in this room must ask ourselves, what do these treaties mean, and what values do they represent?

Sitting here with us are representatives of nations that aim to stockpile chemical weapons while their countries vigorously promote a treaty to establish a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction. What do these treaties mean, when they are signed by nations for which the words within these treaties mean absolutely nothing?

We believe words that do matter. In the Jewish faith, it is believed that the world was created with words:

“And God said, let there be light. And there was light.”

Words do matter. They mattered when, earlier today, the leader of the terrorist organization Hamas, Khaled Mashaal, called upon all scholars who teach jihad to all who teach and learn to go out this Friday and apply the theories. As recent events in Israel show us all, this is a clear call to murder.

Words do matter when representatives of various countries in this room cannot fathom condemning the terrorist organization Hamas for taking close to 200 hostages to use as human shields. They cannot bring themselves to show any sort of sympathy for the victims of the unthinkable atrocities that claimed the lives of 1,200 men, women and children.

There is a saying in Arabic:

(spoke in Arabic)

“People cannot give what they do not have.”

(spoke in English)

What meaning can those representatives' signatures possibly have when they cannot bring themselves to condemn the inexcusable, the unthinkable, the unforgivable.

We, the Jewish people, believe in the importance of words. In the terrible darkness of these most recent days, we call on Committee members — representatives of various nations and organizations — to condemn these horrific terrorist acts, these crimes against humanity. Be brave. Let there be light.

The Chair: In accordance with the Committee's decision at its organizational meeting that at least one and a half hours of the general debate be devoted to statements by civil society, the Committee will now hear statements by the representatives of non-governmental organizations. I extend a warm welcome to all present today and would request all speakers to kindly keep their statements short, to no longer than five minutes. In keeping with the Committee's established practice, I will now suspend the meeting to enable us to continue in an informal setting.

The meeting was suspended at 4.55 p.m. and resumed at 6.05 p.m.

The Chair: I would like to inform members that this brings to an end the Committee's general debate on all disarmament and international security agenda items allocated to it.

The next meeting of the Committee will be held tomorrow afternoon at 3 p.m. sharp in this conference room, for a debate on the working methods of the Committee and programme planning.

The meeting rose at 6.10 p.m.