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Seventy-eighth session

First Committee

12th meeting

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Chair: Mr. Paulauskas (Lithuania)

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

Agenda items 90 to 108 (continued)

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

The Chair: I would like to remind members that the First Committee will meet all day today. In that connection, delegations wishing to exercise the right of reply will be able to do so at the end of this afternoon's meeting.

In accordance with the programme of work, the Committee will first hear a briefing by the Chair of the Group of Governmental Experts to Further Consider Nuclear Disarmament Verification Issues, Mr. Jørn Osmundsen of Norway, to whom I extend a warm welcome.

After hearing from Mr. Osmundsen, the Committee will switch to an informal mode to afford delegations an opportunity to ask questions. Immediately thereafter, the formal plenary will resume to allow the Committee to continue its thematic discussion under the cluster "Nuclear weapons". Let me remind members that we have 73 speakers remaining under that cluster and that, again, we will also hold a meeting this afternoon.

The Committee will now hear a briefing by Mr. Jørn Osmundsen.

Mr. Osmundsen (Norway): I would like to thank you, Mr. Chair, for this opportunity to brief the First

Committee on the work of the Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) to Further Consider Nuclear Disarmament Verification Issues, which concluded its work in May. In this briefing, I will focus on the modalities for the GGE, how it conducted its work and its final report (see A/78/120), which was adopted by consensus.

Let us begin with the modalities. The Secretary-General established the GGE pursuant to resolution 74/50, which provided the parameters for its work. Paragraph 6 of the resolution constituted the primary guidance for the GGE, requesting it to

"further consider nuclear disarmament verification issues, including, inter alia, the concept of a Group of Scientific and Technical Experts, building on the report of the Group of Governmental Experts on Nuclear Disarmament Verification and the views of Member States."

It is therefore important to highlight that our GGE was the second GGE on nuclear disarmament verification. The first GGE considered the role of verification in advancing nuclear disarmament and worked between 2018 and 2019. Its consensus report of 2019 (see A/74/90) included seven principles and seven general conclusions. Our Group was mandated to build on that report and the views of Member States thereon contained in document A/75/126.

The work of our GGE was delayed by the pandemic; thereafter, it held two sessions in 2022 and two sessions in 2023, all of them in Geneva, in line with decision 76/515, of December 2021. As Chair of the Group, I

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was also mandated by resolution 74/50 to organize two informal intersessional consultative meetings in New York to update Member States on the work of the Group and receive their input for the experts. Those meetings were held after the first and the third sessions.

Turning to the work of the Group, to make the best use of the time in the lead-up to its first session, I organized, in cooperation with the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) and Wilton Park, informal virtual briefings and exchanges of ideas on nuclear disarmament verification in preparation for the formal start of the GGE; we also held a fourth informal meeting before its final session. At the start of the first session, the GGE elected me as Chair and adopted its agenda and methods of work. Before each session, the Group adopted a programme of work for that session. The Group's work was based on consensus.

In terms of the issues that the Group discussed, resolution 74/50 provided the Group with some guidance, but at the same time it had the freedom to choose its issues. The resolution explicitly mentions the concept of a group of scientific and technical experts as an issue to be considered, without prejudice to other relevant topics that the Group could decide to consider. The resolution refers to an area that the Group might want to reflect upon; specifically, paragraph 4 "welcomes efforts for capacity-building on nuclear disarmament verification".

The Group made use of the first session to identify issues on which to conduct its work, which can be placed in three main categories: conceptual issues, capacity-building and the concept of a group of scientific and technical experts. Gender, youth and education were highlighted as cross-cutting issues for discussion. The issues were discussed during our second and third sessions, which became the basis for a draft report that was discussed at the fourth session. Experts also committed to intersessional work through working papers, and I was very pleased to see that experts also produced several joint papers. The working papers became, indeed, the engine for the work of the GGE. They became avenues for seeking positions that could enjoy consensus and helped focus the discussions of the Group. At the fourth and last session of the Group, held from 15 to 19 May, it adopted its final report by consensus.

It was important to acknowledge in the report that there were differing views on how to take forward work on nuclear disarmament verification. The Group was also mindful that its discussions were not intended to prejudge any future negotiations or agreements. The report is therefore comprehensive; it reflects both the agreements of the Group and also its discussions. There was general agreement that the Group should discuss conceptual issues, and there was therefore a greater extent of convergence to be found in those discussions. With respect to practical work on nuclear disarmament verification, it was clear that there were more divergent views thereon; accordingly, that part of the report largely reflects the different views that were expressed.

The report consists of three sections: a short introduction, a comprehensive section on the issues discussed by the Group and, finally, conclusions and recommendations. Section II is based on the structure of the discussions in the Group, and I would like to start by highlighting section II.A, "General considerations", on which there was agreement. The Group also agreed on a working definition of nuclear disarmament verification to guide its work and found some general convergence on the objectives and purposes of nuclear disarmament verification, institutional arrangements and the governance and scope of nuclear disarmament verification.

However, the Group had a very broad discussion on those elements, and several working papers were produced looking at how verification of nuclear disarmament can be broken down in a more manageable manner. This was discussed as contexts and measures for verification of the nuclear disarmament process. Also, work on past experiences and developing capabilities were discussed thoroughly by the Group. Capacity-building was also widely discussed in the Group. The report covers discussions on general considerations, regional approaches, the value of exercises and sustainability in funding.

On the concept of a group of scientific and technical experts, the Group continued to build on the work done by the first GGE and developed this discussion further. The report reflects a substantial discussion, focusing on objectives for a GSTE, a possible mandate and modalities. Even if there is no consensus at this stage on the value of such a group of scientific and technical experts, the interest and support to the concept is extensive — and I am convinced that the discussions on such a possible group will continue.

The Group also discussed cross-cutting issues relating to nuclear disarmament verification, gender, youth and education and held dedicated discussions and presentations on the importance of gender in nuclear disarmament verification. I very much welcome that the Group engaged in those discussions as well.

The report presents 21 conclusions, the majority of which — 14 — were agreements by the Group. However, seven conclusion points were also added to also capture the full breadth of discussions. All statement conclusions are by consensus, while discussion conclusions reflect the diverging positions of the group. The report also presents five recommendations, and I was pleased to see that, in general, there was solid agreement in the Group on continuing work on nuclear disarmament verification. The Conference on Disarmament has already had one meeting on the report, organized under the German presidency, on 15 August 2023.

Looking at the two GGEs combined, I believe it is a strong signal that both achieved consensus reports, showing that agreement and convergence is possible on this topic. I also believe that the two GGEs have established a strong conceptual foundation for further work on nuclear disarmament verification in a multilateral context.

Finally, I would like to highly appreciate all the Experts in the Group. They produced a high number of working papers and all Experts also engaged in a constructive and collegial manner, showing a strong commitment to successfully conclude our work. The work of the GGE would not been able to do its work without the high professionalism and support from the United Nations Office in Geneva. I would especially highlight the work of Silvia Mercogliano of the Office for Disarmament Affairs, as well as James Revill and Andreas Persbo, who served as consultants from UNIDIR. I also thank my colleague from our Ministry, Joon Grane Hetland, for his valuable support to the process.

The Chair: I thank Mr. Osmundsen for his comprehensive briefing.

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

The meeting was suspended at 10.15 a.m. and resumed at 10.25 a.m.

The Chair: The Committee will now continue its thematic discussion under the cluster “Nuclear weapons”.

Before I open the floor, I would like to remind all delegations that the time limit for statements during the thematic segment is five minutes when speaking in a national capacity and seven minutes for statements on behalf of several delegations.

Mr. Larsen (Australia): I take the floor on behalf of Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, the Republic of Korea, Romania, the Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Sweden, Türkiye and my own country, Australia.

Our countries are united in our concern about the increasing nuclear risks in the current challenging international security environment. We share the vision of a safer world free of nuclear weapons and are committed to progressing a realistic and pragmatic agenda towards that goal. Our approach to nuclear disarmament takes into account the international security environment without losing sight of the risks posed by nuclear weapons. It is underpinned by an acute awareness of the catastrophic humanitarian and environmental consequences of nuclear weapons use. It is and always has been in the interest of humankind that nuclear weapons never be used again.

Russia’s brutal, illegal war of aggression against Ukraine, its dangerous nuclear rhetoric and attacks on and around civilian nuclear infrastructure have shaken the global rules-based order. We commend the crucial role that the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) is playing in difficult circumstances in relation to the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant.

We are deeply concerned about Russia’s so-called suspension of its participation in the New START Treaty. We urge Russia to immediately return to compliance with the treaty and to engage in dialogue with the United States on strategic stability and a successor treaty.

We condemn the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea’s ongoing development of its illegal and destabilizing nuclear and ballistic missile programmes and other means of delivery, including the record number of its ballistic missile launches. Its pursuit of

weapons of mass destruction in violation of Security Council resolutions increases the nuclear threat to us all and must be addressed urgently.

We urge Iran to return without delay to diplomacy and the full implementation of all its obligations under the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. The current state of advancement of Iran's enrichment programme, nuclear research and development represents an increasing concern. We commend and continue to support fully the IAEA's crucial mandate and efforts and urge Iran to give unfettered access to all IAEA personnel.

If we are to make progress, we cannot ignore the international security environment or fail to recognize the constraints it may impose. We must move forward collaboratively in ways that reduce risks, build trust and strengthen verification and compliance with a view to achieving further reductions in nuclear weapons. The 78-year record of the non-use of nuclear weapons must be maintained, and the 40-year-long decrease in global nuclear arsenals must be advanced, and not reversed. We must overcome the stalemate in the Conference on Disarmament and commence negotiations for a fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT). Pending finalization of an FMCT, we call on States that possess or produce fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear-explosive devices to declare and uphold a moratorium on their production.

We renew our call on all remaining annex 2 States to ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty without delay and urge all States to refrain from any actions that would undermine the object and purpose of the Treaty. We are deeply concerned by Russia's recent comments in that context. All States parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) have endorsed a commitment towards a nuclear-weapon-free world; however, the nuclear-weapon States have a particular responsibility, as outlined in article VI of the NPT. We welcomed the statement by the five permanent members of the Security Council in January 2022, endorsing the principle that a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought. It is deeply concerning that Russia followed up that statement by embarking on its war of aggression against Ukraine and deploying dangerous nuclear rhetoric. We call on Russia to cease its actions that take us further from our shared goal.

The world expects the nuclear-weapon States to deliver on their commitment through tangible

steps, including on immediate concrete measures to reduce risks that are based on previous commitments and firmly anchored in the aim of preventing the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons. While not a substitute for action on disarmament, such measures can offer genuine security benefits and represent a step towards disarmament. We welcome the very substantive and constructive discussions on improved reporting and accountability held by the working group on strengthening the NPT review process and by the Preparatory Committee for the 2026 NPT Review Conference at its first session. We appreciate the efforts of some nuclear-weapon States to increase their transparency on doctrines and the nuclear weapons they possess, and we call on others to do the same.

We welcome the consensus report of the Group of Governmental Experts to Further Consider Nuclear Disarmament Verification Issues (see A/78/120), and we encourage States to continue work on those issues and on the concept of irreversibility. We welcome the increased international focus on the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons, as exemplified through the holding of four international conferences on the subject and through visits to Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and we believe that continued discussion remains warranted as we progress towards our shared goal of a world without nuclear weapons. We also welcome the increased attention to the needs of communities affected by nuclear use or testing and recognize the importance of international cooperation in addressing the harm that nuclear use and testing have caused. That includes acknowledging that there have been disproportionate physical, social, emotional, environmental and economic effects of the use and testing of nuclear weapons on women, Indigenous peoples and low-income communities.

The First Committee provides us with a chance to exchange views on the challenges and opportunities for progress and to make a frank assessment of what we can do collectively to advance our shared non-proliferation and disarmament objectives and take us closer to a world without nuclear weapons. We stand ready to cooperate with all States Members of the United Nations with that objective in mind.

Mr. Damico (Brazil): I am honoured to address the Committee on behalf of Australia, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, Croatia, Czechia, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Japan,

Lithuania, Luxembourg, Mexico, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, the Republic of Korea, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, the United States of America and my own country, Brazil. Our statement addresses the work on nuclear disarmament verification.

We commend the conclusion of the work of the Group of Governmental Experts to Further Consider Nuclear Disarmament Verification Issues (GGE), which resulted in a substantial consensus report (see A/78/120) that, together with the 2019 report of the Group of Governmental Experts to Consider the Role of Verification in Advancing Nuclear Disarmament (see A/74/90), provides us with a solid conceptual foundation for taking forward practical work on nuclear disarmament verification in a multilateral context.

The recent GGE had a mandate to consider nuclear disarmament issues, including the concept of a group of scientific and technical experts. We were encouraged by the depth of the discussions on that issue, as reflected in the consensus report and in the many working papers produced, which will be useful reference points in taking forward that work. We share the conviction that the international community should now make progress on the idea of establishing such a group. The work of the two GGEs provides a solid foundation on which to build, together with other previous and current experiences and initiatives working on the practical aspects of nuclear disarmament verification.

The establishment of a group of scientific and technical experts on nuclear disarmament verification would provide unique practical benefits in support of the long-term goal of nuclear disarmament. A group of scientific and technical experts would enable States to work collaboratively on nuclear disarmament verification in a multilateral setting. Going forward, we believe that some of the core objectives for such a group could be to appraise knowledge on nuclear disarmament verification, derived from previous and ongoing initiatives on nuclear disarmament verification or related areas; to identify technical challenges in nuclear disarmament verification in terms of technologies, methodologies and procedures; to enable States to participate in technical nuclear disarmament verification discussions on a voluntary basis; to incorporate and preserve knowledge on nuclear disarmament verification within the United Nations system; and to provide assurance to the international community that States are focused on that matter.

In pursuing the establishment of a group of scientific and technical experts, we invite all interested Member States to engage in an informal dialogue on that matter. The Governments of Brazil and Norway stand ready to facilitate such deliberations. Key considerations going forward would be clarifying the objective and identifying mandate and the modalities for such a group.

Mr. Ganou (Burkina Faso) (*spoke in French*): My delegation associates itself with the statements made by the representatives of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and the Republic of Indonesia on behalf of the Group of African States and the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, respectively (see A/C.1/78/PV.11).

To paraphrase the words of President Eisenhower, thirty-fourth President of the United States of America, 70 years ago, I would like to say that the existence of nuclear weapons represents such a grave danger to the world that it consistently obscures the enormous potential of the atom for peace. His speech, which paved the way for the creation of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), must not remain a mere historical fact; it must be transformed into a complete and absolute reality. Indeed, the peaceful use of nuclear science and technology can confer considerable benefits upon humankind. With that in mind, my country would like to emphasize the fact that nothing should hinder developing countries' access to nuclear technology for peaceful purposes or international cooperation to that end, particularly within the framework of the IAEA's Technical Cooperation Programme.

However, that right to peaceful use must be accompanied by the requirement to adopt adequate nuclear safety and security measures to prevent the risk of accidents or diversion. Nuclear terrorism poses a real danger, and my country remains convinced that the development and maintenance of high standards of nuclear safety and security must be prerequisites for the optimal use of nuclear science and technology.

The impasse in the negotiations between nuclear-weapon States and non-nuclear-weapon States and the lack of any significant progress on reducing nuclear arsenals give legitimate cause for concern. In that connection, my country would like to reaffirm its deep concern about the continuing threat posed by nuclear weapons, whose devastating impact on humankind no longer needs to be demonstrated. After a 13-year absence, my country was recently elected to the IAEA

Board of Governors for the period 2023–2025 at the IAEA's sixty-seventh General Conference, which was held in Vienna from 25 to 29 September. My country reiterates its thanks to IAEA member States for the confidence they have placed in us. Aware of its responsibility as a member of the Board of Governors, Burkina Faso is determined to contribute constructively to the promotion of the peaceful and safe use of nuclear science and technology. To that end, we reiterate our firm commitment to the objectives of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) and will work to ensure the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

Nuclear safety and security are essential to the future of our planet. Therefore, the preservation of nuclear safety and security measures is a collective duty that all States must assume. International cooperation is essential to overcome the challenges related to nuclear security and nuclear disarmament. That is why we are urgently calling for the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and the universalization of the NPT. We also urge all nuclear Powers to fulfil their obligations under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures to achieve nuclear disarmament.

We are pleased that Burkina Faso has been chosen to host the Regional Workshop on Conducting Transport Security Inspections of radioactive materials, scheduled for 11 to 14 December.

In conclusion, I reaffirm my country's unwavering commitment to nuclear disarmament and its readiness to work with all United Nations Member States to advance that noble cause and build a world that is safer for future generations.

Mr. Sánchez Kiesslich (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): The world is at a complex juncture, as was clearly expressed by our leaders during the high-level week and in the statements we have heard in the First Committee. However, it is particularly alarming that such a scenario is compounded by the increasing rhetoric about the threats of the use of nuclear weapons. We are concerned about the normalization of those weapons in recent years and that parties continue to advocate the retention, threat and use of nuclear weapons as a means of coercion.

It is our duty to avoid the catastrophic humanitarian consequences that would result from an accidental or intentional detonation of a nuclear weapon. We cannot think in the abstract, as those who cling to those horrific instruments do. We are talking about hundreds of thousands of immediate deaths and irreparable damage to health and ecosystems.

The vast majority of Members of the United Nations do not possess nuclear weapons, nor have they built their security on them. The majority of States are in full compliance with their obligations under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), and some have also acquired additional obligations through their accession to the treaties establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones, and more recently, through the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW).

We commend Secretary-General Guterres for drawing attention to the need to eliminate nuclear weapons as a necessary action in the New Agenda for Peace. The existence of nuclear weapons is part of our current problems, not part of the solution.

It is with a great sense of responsibility that my country will preside over the second Meeting of States Parties to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons to be held in New York from 27 November to 1 December. We invite all Members of the United Nations that are not yet parties to the Treaty participate as observers.

On behalf of the New Agenda Coalition, we are submitting draft resolution A/C.1/78/L.33, entitled "Towards a nuclear-weapon-free world: accelerating the implementation of nuclear disarmament commitments". The main objective of the draft resolution, as the name suggests, is to draw attention to the need to accelerate the implementation of disarmament obligations and commitments under the NPT, especially disarmament obligations and commitments under the NPT, especially on the part of the nuclear-weapon States. The text builds on resolution 76/49 and seeks to ensure that General Assembly strengthen its call for the implementation of those commitments and obligations. As we explained during the presentation on 6 October, the draft resolution also contains elements of the preparations and deliberations of the Working Group on Further Strengthening the Review Process of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the first session of the Preparatory Committee, which took place a few months ago.

Moreover, on behalf of Australia, New Zealand and Mexico, I am pleased to introduce draft resolution A/C.1/78/L.45 on the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty for the consideration of the First Committee. We invite delegations to sponsor both texts and support their adoption.

Mr. Kmentt (Austria): Past generations of leaders have systematically added ever more regulations and prohibitions on weapons to save humankind from the scourge of war, and on no issue has that work been of more existential importance than on nuclear weapons.

But much of what we have achieved in the past is now in danger. We see nuclear-armed States are either upgrading or modernizing their arsenals; we see heightened political competition and several conflicts and hotspots that have the potential of escalating to nuclear conflicts. Arms race dynamics are accelerating. The risks of intentional or accidental use of nuclear weapons are increasing. New technologies are adding layers of nuclear risk. A permanent member of Security Council is issuing implicit but unmistakable nuclear threats as a cover for a brutal war of aggression. Nuclear risks are higher than in decades, and the nuclear taboo is in a fragile State.

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is in deep crisis. The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action is in severe danger of being lost. The New START Treaty is suspended, and now it appears that Russia will revoke its ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). We appeal to and urge Russia to reconsider that. Putting an end to nuclear test explosions was and is of crucial interest to the entire international community, and the CTBT is thus a common good for all humankind. We need to increase efforts for its entry into force and ensure that nuclear tests remain firmly in the past.

Those are all extremely disconcerting trends. The unwillingness or inability of nuclear-armed States to extract themselves from the precarious logic nuclear weapons is apparent to all, but we need a paradigm shift on nuclear weapons. We know that a nuclear conflict would have catastrophic and global consequences. Nuclear weapons must never be used again under any circumstances.

Central to that is moving away from the theory of nuclear deterrence, which requires the actual readiness to inflict catastrophic humanitarian consequences and mass destruction on an unimaginable and global

scale. It is illogical to differentiate between the threat of use and the use of nuclear weapons. They are intrinsically intertwined. Any use or threat of use of nuclear weapons is a violation of international law. We condemn unequivocally any and all nuclear threats, whether they be explicit or implicit and irrespective of the circumstances. Nuclear deterrence rests on many assumptions and is fraught with uncertainties. We cannot be sure if and how nuclear deterrence works, but we know for sure that it can fail. And if it fails, it likely fails in much more catastrophic and global ways than previously understood. A growing body of new scientific research underscores that. We cannot base humankind's common security and survival on ultimately unprovable assumptions. I therefore urge all delegations to support this year's draft resolution A/C.1/78/L.23 on the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons.

We are also pleased to see the Committee finally take up the issue of victim assistance and environmental remediation, which we fully support.

The non-nuclear majority of countries has unequivocally rejected nuclear weapons. With the Treaty Prohibiting Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), nuclear weapons are finally outlawed. We call on all States to attend next month's second Meeting of States Parties and engage with the Treaty and its underlying concerns. The TPNW is a concrete step that all States can — and should — take to strengthen the nuclear disarmament regime, and that regime needs all the support it can get. I therefore encourage all States to support draft resolution A/C.1/78/L.24, on the TPNW.

We also underline the urgency of negotiations for a broader and deeper New START Treaty successor agreement and call for the commencement of negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty.

We are deeply concerned about Iran's actions that are inconsistent with the JCPOA and call for the return to its full implementation.

We also remain deeply concerned about the nuclear and ballistic missile programmes of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. We urge the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to cease such escalatory behaviour and engage in serious negotiations to achieve the complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization of the Korean peninsula.

We need to see where we are heading — and today it is clearly in the wrong direction. Let us move beyond the current short-sightedness, reinforce our multilateral nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime and face the challenges of our time through diplomacy and negotiation.

Ms. Lim (Singapore): Singapore aligns itself with the statements delivered by the representative of Viet Nam, on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, and by the representative of Indonesia, on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/78/PV.11).

The elimination of nuclear weapons is a paramount imperative of the United Nations. The international community has made significant progress in nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation under the auspices of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and landmark agreements such as the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). However, that progress is being threatened. New challenges and a divided international security environment have stymied positive momentum in the nuclear disarmament circuit, and in some cases have even regressed to escalatory nuclear rhetoric and actions. At the Nagasaki National Peace Memorial Hall for the Atomic Bomb Victims in August, the Secretary-General warned that the risk of nuclear catastrophe is at its highest level since the Cold War. He also prioritized the elimination of nuclear weapons as the first recommendation for action in his New Agenda for Peace. Let me make three points in that regard.

First, Singapore underscores the importance of the rule of law and adherence to international obligations. Like other small States, our security and prosperity depend on the international rule of law. Singapore reiterates its commitment to the NPT as the cornerstone of the international nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime. Nuclear-weapon States must remain firmly committed to their obligations under the NPT, including under article VI. We urge nuclear-weapon States to take practical steps to curb the modernization of their nuclear arsenals, practice accountability and transparency in their nuclear-weapon programmes and refrain from actions that contravene the objective and purpose of the treaty. Non-NPT States must also be involved in disarmament discussions as we work towards the universalization of the NPT. Singapore reiterates its strong support for the

entry into force of the CTBT. We are encouraged by the recent ratifications this year by Solomon Islands and Sri Lanka and urge all countries, particularly the remaining annex 2 countries, to sign and ratify the treaty as soon as possible. We also support the commencement of the long-overdue negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty under the Conference on Disarmament.

Secondly, we emphasize the need for continued dialogue, especially in today's geopolitical climate, in which hardening positions increase the risk of miscalculation and unintended escalation. International cooperation and dialogue on the global disarmament agenda cannot be allowed to stall or unravel. We welcome the discussions held at the first session of the Preparatory Committee for the eleventh NPT Review Conference on reducing the role of nuclear weapons in security doctrines, strengthening IAEA safeguards, and nuclear safety and security during an armed conflict. We call on all NPT States parties to continue constructive dialogue towards concrete and verifiable measures for nuclear disarmament. We also encourage negotiations on restoring the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action and strategic dialogue among major Powers on existing arms control frameworks. Countries must renew their commitments and take a forward-looking approach to ensure that our cooperative mechanisms remain relevant and effective.

Thirdly, regional approaches, including the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones under article VII of the NPT, are practical contributions towards achieving a nuclear-weapon-free world. Singapore reiterates its full commitment to the Treaty on the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone (SEANWFZ). We look forward to the nuclear-weapon States signing and ratifying the SEANWFZ Protocol, without reservations. We also support efforts towards achieving a nuclear-weapon-free Middle East, including through the upcoming third session of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction.

At a time of increasing challenges to peace and security, the international community must make full use of its existing disarmament tools and adhere to its obligations. What we do, or do not do, will set a precedent for addressing future challenges. Singapore reaffirms its full commitment to working with all Member States to achieve our shared goal of a world without nuclear weapons for the security of all.

Ms. Reyes (Philippines): We align ourselves with the statements delivered by the representative of Viet Nam, on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, and by the representative of Indonesia, on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/78/PV.11).

It has been 78 years since the catastrophic events in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, but we are still faced with the looming existential threat of nuclear weapons. The humanitarian consequences of that era, which was marked by immense suffering, displacement and long-lasting environmental degradation, serve as a stark reminder of the existential threat posed by nuclear weapons. We have never been so close to a global catastrophe, and yet geopolitical tensions continue to rise. Among other challenges to nuclear non-proliferation, we see the following: nuclear sharing, dangerous rhetoric, the modernization of nuclear arsenals, the lack of functional strategic dialogue mechanisms, and the reluctance to heed the call for greater transparency in fulfilling nuclear disarmament commitments. We also see the erosion of trust and dialogue among States. Therefore, we need to redouble our efforts to reverse the trend.

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) remains the cornerstone of the global non-proliferation regime, and the Philippines remains committed to its implementation. We regret that the NPT continues to face adversity in its work. Nevertheless, we do not see any reason for nuclear-weapon States not to implement their obligations. We therefore call on nuclear-weapon States to be held accountable for their disarmament obligations, which they must undertake through benchmarks and actions that are concrete, measurable and time-bound. We also hold the view that the second Meeting of States Parties to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), to be held later this year, will help make progress towards the NPT's main goal and objective of nuclear disarmament. The TPNW never aims to contradict the NPT, but rather supports the overarching goal of the global disarmament and non-proliferation regime. We therefore call on States that have not yet done so to sign and ratify the TPNW.

Much like the TPNW, the entry into force of a multilateral, non-discriminatory, effective and verifiable fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT) would complement the non-proliferation and disarmament regime. It would not only prevent nuclear proliferation

but also put a cap on the expansion of nuclear-weapon stockpiles. That is the main reason that the Philippines, together with Japan and Australia, hosted a high-level event to breathe new life into the three-decade effort towards an FMCT on the sidelines of the high-level week of the General Assembly at its current session. We call on States to implement a moratorium on fissile material production pending the commencement of negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament.

In addition to a moratorium on fissile material production, States must also commit not to carry out nuclear-weapon -test explosions or any other nuclear explosions and maintain their moratoriums in that regard, pending the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. Putting a complete stop to nuclear-weapon-test explosions would help protect and safeguard communities from the short- and long-term impacts of nuclear radiation, as well as its disastrous effects on the environment.

The establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones also reinforces the global nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation framework. Stronger cooperation and coordination between and among them, as well as with the nuclear-weapon States, would help affirm that important role. We are therefore pleased to join our fellow ASEAN member States in submitting a substantive draft resolution (A/C.1/78/L.29) reinforcing the Bangkok Treaty.

We hope that the Russian Federation and the United States will return to the full implementation of the New START Treaty, which would not only be in the best interest of both States bilaterally but would also serve as a beacon of cooperation and commitment to global security in an increasingly complex international landscape.

We also stress the importance of continued peaceful dialogue among all parties concerned in the Korean peninsula, and we stand ready to play a constructive role in promoting a conducive atmosphere for peaceful dialogue among all parties concerned.

Our Main Committee work lasts only for several weeks, but we urge all delegations here to further deepen their commitment to nuclear disarmament. By championing open dialogue, fostering trust and building bridges of cooperation and understanding, we can collectively strive towards a more secure and peaceful world.

Mr. Vidal (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): Chile aligns itself with the statements delivered by the representative of Indonesia, on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, and the representative of Mexico, as Chair of the second Meeting of States Parties to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), on behalf of the States parties to, and signatories of, the TPNW (see A/C.1/78/PV.11), as well as the statement made by the representative of Brazil on behalf of a group of States on nuclear disarmament verification.

The nuclear Powers claim that they are being responsible with the nuclear weapons and arsenals in their possession, since they provide them with security, confidence and certainty. But we wish to insist once again that that whole argument generates only greater concern, unpredictability and insecurity. It is clear that the catastrophic humanitarian and environmental consequences produced by nuclear weapons would have repercussions for decades. In that connection, we are especially concerned about vulnerable groups and the disproportionate impacts on women and girls. Threats made in the name of nuclear weapons, the hosting of such weapons on other territories and the transportation of supplies for their production or modernization cannot be tolerated.

In that sense, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) remains the cornerstone of the international disarmament, non-proliferation and nuclear security architecture. Therefore, it is more necessary than ever to make additional efforts to achieve results and consensus in that area. We call on nuclear-weapon States to fulfil their commitment under article VI of the Non-Proliferation Treaty to completely eliminate their nuclear arsenals.

We believe that the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) strengthens and is fully compatible with the NPT. We urge States to sign, ratify and accede to the TPNW. We invite members to vote in favour of all draft resolutions submitted in relation to that treaty.

The swift entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty is essential. We ask those States listed in its annex 2, whose ratification is essential for the treaty to enter into force, to accelerate the process of signing and/or ratifying the instrument without further delay.

The three treaties I have just mentioned serve as a framework to ensure that nuclear weapons are never used again.

As a country in a region free of nuclear weapons thanks to the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean — the first densely populated region to be declared nuclear-weapon-free — Chile believes that, with political will and action, peace and prosperity can be achieved without nuclear weapons. We call for the consolidation of nuclear-weapon-free zones throughout the world. We reiterate the importance of the immediate start of negotiations on a treaty banning fissile material, including pre-existing stocks.

Chile adheres to the principle of the indivisibility of international security given that all States, regardless of their size or power, have a responsibility to contribute to the consolidation of an international order based on multilateralism and cooperation and regulated by international law, including international humanitarian law.

Finally, once again, we wish to highlight the role of the International Atomic Energy Agency in providing education on, and promoting the use of, nuclear technology, which has allowed fundamental developments in access to its various beneficial applications in areas such as medicine, industry, agriculture, the environment and science.

Mr. Salih (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, the delegation of Iraq aligns itself with the statements delivered by the representative of Indonesia, on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, and the representative of fraternal Jordan, on behalf of the Group of Arab States (see A/C.1/78/PV.11).

More than five decades have elapsed since the entry into force of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), yet its implementation remains unbalanced at the level of its three pillars. The nuclear-weapon States have explicitly failed to translate their nuclear disarmament commitments into practice. They persist in their efforts to develop new types of nuclear weapons and preserve the role of those weapons in their military and security doctrines, with negative repercussions for the credibility and future of the treaty.

The delegation of Iraq is disappointed by the failure of the 2015 and 2020 NPT Review Conferences. We stress the need for political will and adequate

flexibility to overcome the challenges and obstacles encountered previously in order to adopt the measures and recommendations necessary to eradicate those destructive weapons. We therefore hope that concrete steps will be taken to ensure the success of the upcoming eleventh Review Conference.

Iraq once again expresses its deep concern about the increase in the development and production of nuclear-weapon stockpiles. In fact, there are nearly 13,000 nuclear warheads in existence, which constitute a grave danger that threatens the entire world. That requires all of us to collectively take urgent practical and concrete measures to strengthen international and regional peace and security in order to achieve the goal of complete disarmament, as follows.

First, all parties must take serious action towards the universalization of treaties related to disarmament, particularly those involved with eliminating weapons of mass destruction, above all nuclear weapons. There must be full commitment to article VI of the NPT by the nuclear-weapon States, which should implement their obligations undertaken at the 1995 Review and Extension Conference and the 2000 and 2010 Review Conferences.

Secondly, negotiations must begin immediately in order to achieve a binding and non-discriminatory international legal instrument that provides guarantees for the non-use or non-threat of use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States parties to the NPT, which will meet the legitimate security concerns of those States and strengthen mutual trust between the two categories of States.

Thirdly, negotiations must be held within the Conference on Disarmament to achieve a verifiable international treaty to prohibit the production of fissile materials and their stocks leading to nuclear disarmament.

Fourthly, negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament must also begin on a comprehensive treaty on nuclear weapons, setting a timeline for the complete elimination of such weapons in the framework of an effective international verification system. Multilateral efforts will be of vital importance in order to achieve the universality of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, which requires its ratification by the eight States listed in its annex 2. That will positively reflect on international initiatives and outcomes in that regard. Priority must be afforded by the international

community to the issue of nuclear disarmament in order to achieve the ultimate goals of the full and complete elimination of nuclear weapons and the prevention of their use or threat of use under any circumstances or pretexts.

The creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones is a positive step and an important measure for strengthening nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation worldwide. Iraq cautions once more against the outcome that could result from continued procrastination with regard to the non-implementation of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East, which will have a negative effect on the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime.

Mr. Al-Safran (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): My delegation appreciates the interest paid by the General Assembly every year to the important issue of nuclear weapons.

We align ourselves with the statements delivered by the representative of Jordan, on behalf of the Group of Arab States, and the representative of Indonesia, on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/78/PV.11).

Our world is facing accelerating challenges. Increasing regional and international tensions prove that the nuclear non-proliferation regime is at a critical stage. It is therefore important for the international community to make greater efforts to strengthen the disarmament strategy at all levels and implement the commitment to nuclear disarmament. Nuclear weapons must be eliminated in a complete, verifiable and irreversible manner, pursuant to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). That will constitute the principal and most effective guarantee for countering the use or threat to use nuclear weapons.

The international community is still waiting for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons and the convening of negotiations on effective measures to stop the nuclear arms race soon and ensure nuclear disarmament. It is clear that the current incremental approach of the nuclear-weapon States has not led to any tangible and systematic progress to completely eliminate nuclear weapons. Despite the positive developments achieved in the area of nuclear non-proliferation in recent decades, achieving genuine progress urgently requires constructive participation, stronger commitments and the full implementation of legal commitments by the relevant parties concerned in order to ensure complete nuclear disarmament.

The State of Qatar reaffirms its unwavering support for the creation of a zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East in order to remove the spectre of wars and upheavals. As the first step towards achieving that goal, the State of Qatar underscores once again the need to speed up the creation of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, pursuant to Security Council resolution 487 (1981), paragraph 14 of Security Council resolution 687 (1991) and the relevant General Assembly resolutions.

In the light of the tensions and conflicts in various regions of the world, the State of Qatar appeals to Governments and relevant international organizations to play their role pursuant to the NPT, reverse the current trend and bring about the implementation of article VI of the NPT by nuclear-weapon States. We call on all peoples to remind Governments of the devastating humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons and the need to comprehensively prohibit and eliminate those weapons.

The State of Qatar supports all efforts to ensure nuclear safety worldwide. Moreover, in the context of our National Vision 2030 and our May 2022 agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the State of Qatar has proposed new national projects for the IAEA 2024—2025 session. In collaboration with the IAEA, we are setting up a calibration laboratory that will be the largest in the region. In that context, the State of Qatar intends to convene a national forum on the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and its role in national development in the first quarter of 2024, with the aim of promoting knowledge about nuclear techniques and their peaceful uses. All relevant State institutions will participate in that process.

In conclusion, the State of Qatar hopes that nuclear-weapon States will take practical measures in support of the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime, promote a spirit of cooperation and continue an open and constructive dialogue for the maintenance of international peace and security.

Mr. Syrymbet (Kazakhstan): Nuclear weapons are a direct and existential threat to all life on Earth. The long-term health effects of radiation from atomic weapons persist in survivors, passing from generation to generation. Increasing geopolitical tensions, combined with the growing threats to use nuclear weapons and the expansion of nuclear-sharing practices, can lead to further proliferation and destabilization.

Nuclear weapons have become more complex with advances in science and nuclear technologies, as manifested in missile defence and hypersonic delivery systems. The emergence of artificial intelligence has led to even greater uncertainties. There are a number of steps that we urgently need to take.

Restoring trust is imperative. Trust is the pillar of peace with which all States must comply in order to effectively implement key nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation instruments.

We are firmly convinced that it is necessary to strengthen, empower and consolidate the existing nuclear-weapon-free zones, with the aim of replicating them in the Middle East and other parts of the world. Those zones should be similar to the ones that exist in the southern hemisphere and Central Asia.

We are committed to advancing our joint objectives under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), which is the cornerstone of the global disarmament and non-proliferation regime. The consecutive failures of the last two NPT Review Conferences to reach consensus demonstrate deep divergences, against the backdrop of unprecedented challenges facing the global disarmament and non-proliferation regime. We pledge our best efforts to fulfil all our obligations as Chair of the second session of the Preparatory Committee for the eleventh Review Conference and reiterate our commitment to engaging actively and equally with all interested parties during the current review cycle.

Dissatisfaction with regard to the slow pace of progress on disarmament led to the adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), which was supported by a significant majority of non-nuclear-weapon States. We join others in firmly reiterating the collective conviction that the TPNW and the NPT are mutually compatible and reinforcing, in particular with regard to article VI of the NPT.

Kazakhstan continues to implement national strategies and programmes for rehabilitating the Semipalatinsk region and improving the social and economic well-being of the people affected. Doing that alone is a formidable task that requires international assistance. For that reason, Kazakhstan and Kiribati have submitted draft resolution A/C.1/78/L.52, entitled “Addressing the legacy of nuclear weapons: providing victim assistance and environmental remediation to Member States affected by the use or testing of

nuclear weapons”, which aims to utilize the framework of multilateral treaties to promote victim assistance and remediation of contaminated environments. We would like to thank the current sponsors of the draft resolution for supporting us and encourage all States to co-sponsor it.

The existing moratorium on nuclear-weapon testing and other nuclear explosions cannot replace the legally binding effect of a treaty. Any rhetoric or actions that undermine or revisit the existing taboo on nuclear testing are unacceptable. As a country that has suffered from hundreds of nuclear tests, Kazakhstan serves as a vivid example of the long-lasting harmful nature of the effects of radiation on health and the environment. In that context, it is even more alarming to observe indications of ongoing activities at previously dormant test sites of several nuclear-weapon States.

Allow me to reiterate once again that nuclear testing cannot — and should not — be resumed for any reason or under any pretext. We must put a definitive end to nuclear-weapon testing by finally bringing into force the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. We urge all States that have not yet done so to sign and ratify the treaty without delay, in particular the remaining eight annex 2 States.

We need to increase general public awareness about the threat of nuclear-weapon use or testing. For that purpose, Kazakhstan recently initiated the preparation of a joint statement entitled “Right to life without the threat of nuclear weapons”, which was delivered on behalf of 40 nations at the Human Rights Council in Geneva. We invite all to join the ongoing multilateral action for a world free of nuclear weapons, which has been undertaken by the overwhelming majority of Member States.

Mr. Jadoon (Pakistan): We align ourselves with the statement delivered by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/78/PV.11).

The international nuclear landscape continues to be characterized by negative developments. Foremost among them is the failure of the largest nuclear-weapon States to comply with their nuclear disarmament obligations and commitments. Nuclear-weapon arsenals continue to be modernized. The prospect of the resumption of nuclear testing by some States is back within the realm of possibility. The salience of nuclear

weapons in nuclear doctrines and the risks of escalation in conflicts are growing.

Despite numerous conceptual approaches, draft treaty texts, working papers, declarations, General Assembly resolutions and exhortations from world leaders and civil society on achieving a nuclear-weapon free world, that global priority has not seen progress at the multilateral level. In fact, we have witnessed a regression over time. Several decades ago, the strategic implications of nuclear weapons had their own unique identity. Now, with the weaponization of new and emerging capabilities and their integration in the nuclear domain, we are witnessing an exceedingly precarious security landscape.

Nuclear weapons also coexist with new and advanced conventional arms. That requires a new approach to pursuing nuclear disarmament that acknowledges the mutually reinforcing relationship of various weapon systems in tandem with nuclear weapons and their collective impact on the security of States, particularly in situations of asymmetry in conventional and nuclear capabilities. Similarly, it is important to recognize the varying context for States that possess nuclear weapons. For us, the development of those weapons was — and remains — solely guided by the imperatives of security and defence.

We have once again heard the self-serving mantras of some States with regard to a fissile material cut-off treaty. We see their messianic zeal to insist on cost-free proposals, such as the quantitative capping of fissile material, as the “next logical step”, while they resist the inclusion of thousands of tons of fissile material stocks within the scope of an international treaty. The time for pursuing that fundamentally flawed approach has long passed. A treaty that results only in a cut-off in the future production of fissile material would be a non-starter, given that it would perpetuate asymmetries and would have no added value for nuclear disarmament.

The inefficacy and duplicity of that approach is also laid bare when States with so-called moratoriums modernize and increase their nuclear arsenals, or when States exercise double standards by engaging in nuclear cooperation with a country in South Asia that continues to amass fissile material stockpiles outside the scope of safeguards. What is required, therefore, is a realistic approach that recognizes the importance of developing a consensus on a fissile material cut-off treaty that

addresses asymmetries in existing stockpiles and results in equal and undiminished security for all States.

Until a world without nuclear weapons is realized, negotiating a legal instrument on assuring non-nuclear-weapon-States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons remains the most urgent task. An international convention on negative security assurances would help reduce global nuclear risks and would have a transformational impact on creating an international and regional security environment that is conducive to ensuring a world without such weapons. In March of this year, Pakistan transmitted a new working paper on negative security assurances to the Conference on Disarmament (CD/2317) that addresses questions on the sufficiency and efficacy of unilateral declarations made by some States, builds the case for credible and effective negative security assurances as an obligation under international law, elaborates how such a legally binding instrument would uphold the principles of undiminished and equal security and proposes a framework for general and specific obligations. Pakistan has also submitted draft resolution A/C.1/78/L.25, its traditional annual draft resolution on negative security assurances, on behalf of a large number of co-sponsoring States. We look forward to its adoption with the widest possible support.

In conclusion, Pakistan remains committed to the goal of a nuclear-weapon-free world that is achieved in a universal, verifiable and non-discriminatory manner. That goal can be best advanced by the faithful implementation of the cardinal principles enshrined in the final document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (resolution S-10/4). To that end, Pakistan reiterates its call for the commencement of negotiations on a comprehensive nuclear-weapons convention without further delay.

Mr. Vorontsov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The topic of nuclear weapons provokes increasingly heated discussions, and some draft resolutions on the subject have even been record-breaking in terms of splitting votes. That is an indication of the fragmentation of the international community with respect to arms control and nuclear disarmament. One of the key problems is the clear lack of willingness to adequately take into account the security environment in that context. The relationship between progress towards nuclear disarmament and the overall international security situation was well known to the authors of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of

Nuclear Weapons (NPT) when they drafted it, and they clearly incorporated that into the context of the treaty. Subsequently, a consensus formula was developed, stipulating that steps on the nuclear disarmament track should contribute to consolidating international peace and security and should be based on the principle of enhanced yet undiminished security for all.

Attempts to revise that approach deprive us of a critical part of the foundation for working together on the disarmament track. Any schemes involving shortcuts to nuclear zero, including through the simple outlawing of nuclear weapons, are completely unfeasible. Further reductions in nuclear-weapon arsenals are possible only on the basis of a step-by-step approach that takes into account the security interests of all parties. Painstaking work is required to create a climate that is conducive to disarmament efforts, and not only nuclear-weapon States but also non-nuclear-weapon States have an important role to play in that. At the same time, nuclear disarmament should be seen as part of a general and complete disarmament process, in strict compliance with the provisions of the NPT, without selectively considering individual elements in isolation.

At this stage, for our country, the possession of nuclear weapons is the only possible response to specific external threats. By provoking and then continuing to fuel the Ukrainian crisis, the West has shifted to an openly anti-Russia course and has recklessly raised the stakes. Under those conditions, further substantial reductions in our nuclear arsenal would dramatically weaken our national security. Against the backdrop of the general increase in NATO threats, the very fact that the United States retains its nuclear weapons in Europe is already a matter of serious concern. The continued development of NATO's so-called nuclear sharing arrangements under the current circumstances has compelled us to take compensatory measures.

The United States destructive policy has continued to have a devastating effect on the architecture of arms control agreements. Given the dismantling of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty and the suspension of the New START Treaty, Russia is taking a number of measures in order to maintain predictability and stability in the nuclear missile field. We continue to adhere to the central limits provided for in the New START Treaty, and we continue to notify the United States of upcoming intercontinental ballistic-missile and submarine-launched ballistic missile launches. We observe the unilateral moratorium on the deployment

of ground-based intermediate-range and shorter-range missiles, which is, however, under serious pressure due to the active preparations of the United States for the deployment of such weapons in Europe and the Asia-Pacific region.

Having ratified the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) in 2000, Russia has been patiently waiting for the United States to take a similar step. However, we see no signs of that. All patience comes to an end. Currently, a bill to revoke Russia's ratification of the CTBT is being prepared. That will balance our status under the treaty with that of the United States. The withdrawal of our ratification does not mean that our country intends to resume nuclear testing. As Russian President Vladimir Putin has said, we will not be the first to conduct nuclear tests. The responsibility for how that situation develops lies entirely with the United States.

Arms control cannot be carried out without taking into account the overall military, political and strategic situation. It is completely unrealistic to call for the immediate launching of nuclear arms-control negotiations if those negotiations are viewed in complete isolation from the current realities and the state of relations between the nuclear Powers. We are convinced that arms control should aim to consolidate a reciprocal political will in order to reduce tensions and ensure long-term stability on the basis of mutual respect for fundamental security interests. Those issues should be addressed as part of holistic work aimed at achieving a comprehensive and sustainable decrease in the level of international conflict on the basis of the principles of equal rights, multipolarity and indivisible security.

Mr. Moriko (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): My delegation welcomes the convening of this thematic debate and aligns itself with the statements delivered by the representative of Indonesia, on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, and the representative of Nigeria, on behalf of the Group of African States (see A/C.1/78/PV.11). I would like to add several remarks in my national capacity.

Building a world free of nuclear weapons, a long-standing objective, cannot be an optional undertaking for our States, individually or collectively. For that reason, the current trajectory of our actions is as incomprehensible as it is inadmissible. We see the exacerbation of international geopolitical tensions and the increased risk of nuclear escalation, the

modernization of nuclear weapons, the inertia in nuclear disarmament and the successive failures of the NPT Review Conferences. Given the situation, everyone should show goodwill and participate in good faith and through concrete actions in order to achieve our original objective.

The current recurrence of the threat of the use of nuclear weapons means that we must work to give real practical force to the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the legality of the threat or use of nuclear weapons.

It is also essential to ensure that the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons is restored to its rightful place as the cornerstone of the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation architecture. The implementation of all commitments under the Treaty must be revitalized so as to promote complete, verifiable and irreversible nuclear disarmament. Nuclear-weapon States, in particular, must endeavour to respect their obligations of transparency and of granting negative security guarantees to the non-nuclear-weapon States.

As a complement to the NPT, the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) must be the subject of increased attention, with a view to enhancing its importance and effectiveness. That requires its universalization through the accession of countries that have not yet done so — above all, nuclear-weapon States under the NPT and the other possessor States. My country also hopes that the second meeting of States Parties to the TPNW, scheduled for the end of this year, will help speed up the achievement of the objective of the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

Furthermore, Côte d'Ivoire, which demonstrated its commitment to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) by signing it the day after it was opened for signature and which has long supported the annual resolution on the effective implementation of the CTBT, renews its appeal to the eight countries listed in annex 2 to ratify it so that it can finally enter into force. In the meantime, the observance of moratoriums on all forms of nuclear testing, including laboratory nuclear testing, should be the norm.

My delegation also calls for voluntary moratoriums on the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and nuclear explosive devices, until such time as a treaty banning the production of such material, whose negotiations we eagerly await, is adopted.

Because of their usefulness in making effective progress towards nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, the positive experience of nuclear-weapon-free zones ought to be pursued all over the world, especially in areas of recurrent tensions.

We also need to redouble our efforts to raise awareness of the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons and to broaden the scope of the initiative on the humanitarian impact of the use of nuclear weapons and of draft resolution A/C.1/78/L.23, on the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons, two projects in which Côte d'Ivoire is involved.

Preventing nuclear terrorism must also be an imperative. For Côte d'Ivoire, promoting the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism, which it joined in 2007, and furthering the implementation of resolution 1540 (2004) and draft resolution A/C.1/78/L.36, on measures to prevent terrorists from acquiring weapons of mass destruction, are efforts towards that end.

In conclusion, Côte d'Ivoire calls for tangible progress by the end of this session towards a world free of the nuclear threat.

Ms. Stoeva (Bulgaria): Bulgaria aligns itself with the statement made by the observer of the European Union (see A/C.1/78/PV.11), and I would like to add a few points in my national capacity.

But before I continue, I would like to express Bulgaria's unequivocal condemnation of the terrorist attacks by Hamas on Israel and the violence against its innocent citizens. We stand in solidarity with the Israeli people and reiterate our utmost rejection of terrorism in all its forms.

The continued undermining of trust in the arms control and non-proliferation sphere is deeply worrisome. After the end of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty in 2019 due to the Russian Federation's non-compliance, the New START Treaty remains the only binding mechanism providing trust in, and verification of, the reduction of strategic nuclear arsenals. We are concerned about the Russian Federation's suspension of its participation in the New START Treaty and call upon it to return to its compliance with the Treaty and to prove its commitment to the 3 January 2022 joint statement of the leaders of the five nuclear-weapon States on preventing nuclear war and avoiding an arms race.

Another concerning development is the announced intention of the Russian Federation, an annex 2 State, to revoke its ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. The Treaty is one of the building blocks in the construction of a world without nuclear weapons, and Bulgaria remains firmly committed to its early entry into force and its universalization.

Nuclear disarmament should be effective, verifiable and irreversible. We believe that it can be achieved only within the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) framework, namely, its article VI, and through a progressive approach based on mutual trust and taking into consideration the security environment.

Unfortunately, the first session of the NPT Preparatory Committee failed to adopt a consensual report. Yet, we must continue to focus on ensuring progress in the implementation of the previous commitments of the 1995, 2000 and 2010 Review Conferences and in seeking new pathways towards reaffirming and strengthening the Treaty's regime during the current review cycle. We welcome the constructive discussions at the NPT working group on strengthening the Treaty review process, including on improved transparency, effectiveness and accountability, and we will continue our work to build on them.

The commencement of negotiations on a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices, (FMCT) within the Conference on Disarmament and in accordance with the Shannon mandate, remains one of our main priorities in the nuclear disarmament field. Pending the entry into force of an FMCT, all States should abide by a moratorium on the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons.

Bulgaria considers the safeguards system of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to be a fundamental component of the nuclear non-proliferation regime and a guarantee for the development of the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

The Russian Federation's full-scale invasion has impeded the IAEA from conducting its safeguards and verification activities in Ukraine and significantly increased the threat of a nuclear accident. As a member of the Board of Governors, we condemn that dangerous and irresponsible behaviour and call for the full implementation of the IAEA Director General's

seven pillars for ensuring safety and security during an armed conflict.

Finally, Bulgaria strongly supports the IAEA technical cooperation programme. It is a key mechanism for transferring technology, building capacity and improving nuclear safety and security that enhances the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. During the past year Bulgaria successfully conducted three national projects on radiation protection, knowledge management and agriculture, within the IAEA Technical Cooperation Programme, and now continues to support the Zoonotic Disease Integrated Action initiative with national contributions.

Mr. Štěpánek (Czechia): Czechia fully aligns itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union (see A/C.1/78/PV.11).

My delegation already shared a number of concerns in our statement in the general debate (see A/C.1/78/PV.3). We addressed Russia's aggression against Ukraine, the precarious situation of the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant resulting from the Russian occupation, as well as our concern about China's lack of transparency with regard to its nuclear arsenals, Iran's lack of cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's disregard of Security Council resolutions.

Many countries have spoken critically on the slow progress in nuclear disarmament. We sympathize with their frustration. Czechia, too, wishes to exist in a world free of nuclear weapons, and it remains our goal, in accordance with article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).

Unfortunately, Russia's behaviour over the past two decades, culminating in the full-scale military invasion of Ukraine, simply does not allow countries in Europe to feel safe. It therefore cannot come as a surprise that the prospect of NATO membership, including its nuclear deterrence, is becoming more attractive than ever to a number of countries, including Ukraine. A direct attack by Russia on its neighbour, whose sovereignty and security it pledged to respect through its signing of the 1994 Memorandum on Security Assurances in Connection with Ukraine's Accession to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, has taught us all a grave lesson. We especially invite

non-European countries to consider the impact of the Russian aggression from that angle as well.

It is regrettable that the international disarmament architecture continues to deteriorate, as can be seen from the example of the New START Treaty. We regret Russia's purported suspension of the New START Treaty and its preceding failure to honour the legal obligations vis-à-vis the verification mechanism under the treaty. The New START Treaty continues to be in the security interest of all States. We therefore call on all concerned to act responsibly and engage constructively in order to revive the downward stockpile trajectory, in line with article VI of the NPT.

The dismal security circumstances must not weaken our resolve to uphold the existing disarmament and non-proliferation architecture. We have just entered a new review cycle of the NPT. The first session of the Preparatory Committee for the eleventh Review Conference was preceded by the convening of a working group on further strengthening the review process. We were heartened by the level of cross-regional engagement towards a shared goal, especially during the working group meetings. It is very regrettable that one delegation blocked the Chair from submitting a summary of the deliberations in his own capacity and compliant with long-established multilateral practice. We nevertheless commend Ambassador Viinanen on the fair conduct of the work of the Preparatory Committee and working group proceedings. We trust that his summary will serve as a useful basis for all of us next year in Geneva, under the skilled leadership of Ambassador Rakhmetullin.

With regard to the IAEA, we fully support the IAEA safeguards system, which should be further strengthened. We therefore call on all remaining NPT States that have not yet done so to ratify and bring into force their comprehensive safeguards agreements and additional protocols. The Agency is the competent body to ensure the full, impartial, independent and objective implementation of safeguards. We therefore observe with growing unease the demands by some delegations to put the Australia-United Kingdom-United States (AUKUS) project more prominently on the Agency's agenda. AUKUS is a matter for the standard safeguards system in due course. We fully support the Agency's mandate in the field of nuclear safety and refuse the accusations surrounding the discharge of the advanced liquid processing system-treated water from the Fukushima nuclear power station. We have full trust in

the expert assessment by the Agency and appreciate the continued provision of information by the Government of Japan.

Concerning the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), we encourage those States that have not yet signed or ratified it to do so. We are very concerned about the announced intention of the Russian Duma to revoke its ratification of the CTBT. If pursued, that would be yet another step in the wrong direction.

Lastly, we regret that the commencement of negotiations of a fissile material cut-off treaty remains long overdue, and we encourage those concerned to respect a moratorium on the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other explosive devices.

Mr. Segura Aragón (El Salvador) (*spoke in Spanish*): We welcome this thematic debate. Allow me to begin by reaffirming that El Salvador is proud to be a State party to the historic Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean, the Treaty of Tlatelolco, which established the first nuclear-weapon-free zone in the world and has set an important precedent for the establishment of other nuclear-weapon-free zones. My country maintains that those zones are an integral part of the international architecture of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, and in that regard we recognize the work of the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean, which has under its mandate the verification of the implementation of the zone of application of the treaty, comprising the 33 countries of the Latin American and Caribbean region.

In that connection, El Salvador regrets that the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) has a precedent of two Review Conferences that have been unable to adopt substantive final documents. My country has welcomed with renewed interest the new NPT review process and participated in the first session of the Preparatory Committee for the eleventh Review Conference held in Vienna. However, we note with concern that, in an unprecedented move, the Chair of the meeting had to withdraw his summary and recommendations document for the second Preparatory Committee session. It is important to underscore that, for the NPT to continue to be a relevant instrument, substantive progress must be made at Preparatory Committee sessions. The commitments of the previous Review Conferences should be reaffirmed, and

balanced progress on the three pillars of the treaty should be promoted.

We would like to highlight that the NPT is not the only way to achieve our nuclear disarmament objectives. My country, as a State party to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), stresses the importance of that instrument to the implementation of article VI of the NPT. We express our concern about the continued risk to humankind posed by nuclear weapons and reaffirm that the only guarantee against non-use is complete, irreversible elimination, without preconditions and without further delay. We look forward to the second Meeting of States Parties to the TPNW, which will be held later this year at Headquarters and will be chaired by Mexico. We reaffirm our commitment to the Vienna Declaration and Plan of Action adopted at the first Meeting of States Parties and hope to continue to work on implementing the treaty. I would also like to refer to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, since, from our national position, that treaty strengthens the international nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime. It is a near-universal instrument that, in addition to the intrinsic value it brings to international non-proliferation efforts, has important civilian applications and civilian uses for our planet.

To conclude, we would like to delve into two central issues for El Salvador.

First, I would like to underscore the importance of the commitment to ensuring the equal, full and effective participation and leadership of women and men in the instruments that make up the international disarmament and non-proliferation architecture, and in that connection to enhancing the transformative potential of women in the peace and security agendas.

Secondly, I must highlight the importance and value of the participation of civil society and multiple stakeholders in the processes related to nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons. The exchanges with civil society, non-governmental organizations, academia and industry and their contributions are valued. Their commitment to the fulfilment of our common disarmament objectives is celebrated and deserves our recognition.

Mr. Molla (Bangladesh): Bangladesh aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of

Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/78/PV.11).

Nuclear weapons continue to pose the most significant threat to humankind, and the consequences of their use are catastrophic. Our present and future generations live under the constant shadow of nuclear catastrophe. We reiterate our concern regarding the continued existence of nuclear weapons, as a handful of States still possess approximately 13,000 such weapons. Our position on nuclear weapons is unambiguously clear. We believe that those weapons secure no one. Instead, they endanger everyone's security. Therefore, we firmly believe that the ultimate guarantee of security lies only in the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

It was based on that conviction that we ratified the Treaty on Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). We believe that the TPNW will make significant progress towards achieving the universally agreed goal of the complete elimination of nuclear weapons. We urge all States that have not yet done so to join the treaty. We welcome the entry into force of the treaty on 22 January 2021 and the holding of the first Meeting of States Parties in 2022, which adopted a political declaration and an action plan. We look forward to engaging constructively in preparation for the second meeting of States parties to the TPNW. As a matter of priority, we would like to see its full implementation by all, including the nuclear-weapon States.

We consider the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) to be the cornerstone of the global nuclear non-proliferation regime and the fundamental foundation of the pursuit of nuclear disarmament. My delegation expresses deep disappointment over the consecutive failures of the ninth and tenth NPT Review Conferences to adopt a consensual outcome document. We remain concerned at the sustained modernization of nuclear weapons, the continuous improvements in existing nuclear weapons and the development of new types of nuclear weapons. We reiterate the urgent need for systematic, progressive, verifiable, irreversible and time-bound nuclear disarmament, in line with the spirit of article VI of the NPT. We call upon the nuclear-weapon States to demonstrate their genuine political will to enable the eleventh NPT Review Conference to produce a meaningful, tangible and sustainable outcome in order to further strengthen the NPT regime.

Bangladesh reaffirms that nothing should undermine the inalienable rights of all States to develop, research, produce and use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, including for power generation, health care and agriculture. As a nation in development transition, Bangladesh has a legitimate interest in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy to achieve its sustainable development goals. We believe that such rights come with certain responsibilities. We are deeply conscious of our responsibilities and are proceeding in line with the highest standards established by the International Atomic Energy Agency.

We reiterate our support for commencing negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament on an effective, non-discriminatory, legally binding and internationally and effectively verifiable fissile material cut-off treaty. We also continue to align with other States parties in advocating the early entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. We also strongly support the establishment of a legally binding instrument to provide assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons by the nuclear-weapon States.

Bangladesh believes that regional approaches, including the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones under article VII of the NPT, are a practical step to achieve a nuclear weapon-free world. In that regard, we reiterate our support for the establishment in the Middle East of a zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction. To conclude, allow me to call upon all nuclear-weapon States to commit to never use or threaten to use those weapons under any circumstances.

Mr. Diack (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): My delegation aligns itself with the statements delivered by the representative of Indonesia, on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, and the representative of Nigeria, on behalf of the Group of African States (see A/C.1/78/PV.11).

The work of the First Committee begins against a backdrop of complex security crises that underscores the limits of the international community's ability to preserve international peace and security, promote economic and social development and ensure respect for human rights, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations. Despite our shared determination, which has been reaffirmed here repeatedly, it must be

said that the nuclear disarmament to which we all aspire is becoming more and more of a utopian dream.

Today the spectre of nuclear war — the stuff of rhetoric once reserved for an alarmist civil society — has again become a pessimistic narrative that is increasingly alluded to by the community of States. In addition, the surge in conflicts involving nuclear-weapon States, the persistence of terrorism and violent extremism and the emergence of such new threats as new information technologies and artificial intelligence have all increased the risk of nuclear weapons being used, even accidentally.

Given that situation, my delegation would like to call for greater awareness and to advocate for efforts to move positively towards our common goal of the complete, irreversible and verifiable elimination of nuclear weapons. In that regard, my delegation would like to share a few thoughts by way of contribution to the debate.

First, my delegation would like to point out that, while all States must refrain, in their individual and collective behaviour, from undermining our common efforts to preserve peace and security, upholding that responsibility is particularly incumbent upon nuclear-weapon States when it comes to nuclear security. We call on them to shoulder their individual and collective responsibilities and agree on an irreversible, verifiable and more ambitious programme to eliminate their arsenals, including the destruction of missiles carrying nuclear warheads. We also urge them to work in good faith to contain the risks of diversion of their nuclear arsenals and prevent the nuclearization of outer space and of autonomous weapons systems. We urge them to work to curb the horizontal proliferation of nuclear weapons and to provide negative security assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States with a view to concluding, as a matter of the highest priority, a universal, unconditional, non-discriminatory and legally binding instrument to assure all non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. Finally, we must work collectively towards the conclusion of a universal instrument prohibiting the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons, the universalization of the NPT, the implementation of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and decisive action leading to the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. Those instruments are guarantees of general and complete disarmament.

Secondly, my delegation recalls that the goal of achieving nuclear disarmament cannot be viable if, in addition to the existing nuclear Powers, other countries aspire to acquire nuclear weapons. That is why we need to make progress on universalizing nuclear-weapon-free zones. My delegation reiterates its commitment to the Treaty of Pelindaba, which reaffirms Africa's status as a nuclear-weapon-free zone. In the same vein, my country supports the project to establish a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East. It is also crucial to preserve the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action on the Iranian nuclear issue and the agreements on the limitation of strategic offensive arms in Europe. It is also equally important to continue the talks on the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula.

Thirdly, we must work to revitalize nuclear disarmament bodies and shake them out of their chronic lethargy. My delegation notes with concern the repeated failures in our deliberations, notably at the Tenth NPT Review Conference and the meeting of the working group on strengthening the NPT review process. My delegation remains convinced that the growing complexity of geopolitical tensions, the transition to a multipolar world order and the emergence of new areas of conflict cannot absolve us of our collective responsibility to deliberate on general disarmament. On the contrary, at a time when humankind continues to face the real threat of the use of nuclear weapons and security perils of all kinds, it is imperative that we overcome our internal differences to place disarmament back at the heart of our priorities. It is therefore important to reaffirm our shared faith in multilateralism in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation. The revitalization of disarmament bodies will necessarily entail the revitalization of mutual trust, strong political will and a more meaningful commitment to the pacification of international relations on the part of all Member States. Finally, we need to redress the imbalance between a nuclear non-proliferation pillar that benefits from strong language and a nuclear disarmament pillar that is plagued by a lack of stronger wording. It is equally essential to ensure a balance among disarmament, non-proliferation and the promotion of peaceful uses of nuclear energy and technologies.

In the context of the seventy-eighth session of the General Assembly, we invite States to demonstrate great diplomacy and flexibility, as well as a greater

sense of responsibility, in order to preserve the gains achieved since the first resolution (resolution 1 (I)) of the General Assembly, which was adopted on these very issues on 24 January 1946. For its part, Senegal, in its tradition as a country of peace, will continue to make a contribution.

Mr. Eustathiou de los Santos (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation associates itself with the statement made by the representative of Mexico on behalf of the States parties to, and signatories of, the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (see A/C.1/78/PV.11).

In the current international context, my country observes with great concern the conflict between Russia and Ukraine and firmly condemns any illegitimate use of force, while calling for the peaceful settlement of disputes and dialogue between the parties involved. Uruguay has on numerous occasions called for the fundamental principles of international law and human rights to be respected in the context of that conflict.

My country has not developed, produced or acquired weapons of mass destruction, whether chemical, biological or nuclear. It is therefore firmly committed to that issue, demonstrating our contribution to disarmament, non-proliferation, security and international peace. In that regard, Uruguay considers that, in order to achieve nuclear disarmament, it is essential to strengthen exchanges at the multilateral level and generate the necessary trust between the parties in order to make progress on the international agenda. However, it is our understanding, as mentioned by the Secretary-General on the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons, that it is the nuclear-weapon States that must take the lead in disarming and eliminating nuclear weapons immediately and without delay. In that regard, we call on those States to fulfil the unequivocal obligations to eliminate their nuclear arsenals pursuant to article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the commitments resulting from the NPT Review Conferences. We stress that the NPT does not establish any right to the indefinite possession of nuclear weapons by any State, as the Treaty established a transitional status. We also believe that non-nuclear-weapon States should have the opportunity to monitor the actions and fulfilment of the commitments of those countries that do possess them, considering in that case that multilateralism is the appropriate tool to achieve that.

In order to overcome the challenges of disarmament and non-proliferation in a world where there are more than 12,000 nuclear weapons, which represent an unacceptable threat to the future of humankind, we need to promote transparency and build trust. Today more than ever, let us sow a climate of good faith and mutual respect, based on the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and on serious and firm commitments by the international community to disarmament and international security.

We reaffirm our adherence to the Treaty of Tlatelolco, which established the first nuclear-weapon-free zone in a densely populated territory, and to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and urge those members that have not yet ratified it to do so without delay for its entry into force.

Similarly, we reaffirm the binding legal obligations agreed more than 50 years ago with the entry into force of the NPT, and we reiterate that the commitments undertaken internationally must be fulfilled unequivocally and without delay.

Uruguay, as a full party to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, wishes to urge States that are not yet parties to that Treaty to accede to it without delay. And we wish to express to our colleagues from Mexico our support for their work at the second Meeting of States Parties to the Treaty, to be held from 27 November to 1 December.

Mr. Ndung'u (Kenya): Kenya aligns itself with the statements delivered by the representatives of Nigeria and Indonesia on behalf of the Group of African States and the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, respectively (see A/C.1/78/PV.11). I will make some additional remarks in my national capacity.

The existence of nuclear weapons, the threats to deploy them, the transfer of their technology and fissile material continue to threaten and overshadow the peace and security of our globe. Regrettably, 55 years after the conclusion of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), little progress has been made in reducing nuclear arsenals. The risk of miscalculation by nuclear-armed States increases every day, and the potential of weapons falling into the hands of harmful non-State actors is an imminent danger.

The absolute guarantee against nuclear weapons' use lies in their total elimination. Disarmament commitments cannot be optional. They demand our

urgent collective attention and unwavering dedication. Possessor States must abandon the false promise of nuclear deterrence and halt the arms race. The reality of the catastrophic consequences of a nuclear detonation should spark an urgency of constructive engagement, political will and full implementation of the relevant multilateral legal obligations and commitments until the goal of total elimination of nuclear weapons is achieved. We must cultivate trust, political will and commitment to disarmament and non-proliferation. Strengthening the implementation of the NPT, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons is essential.

Kenya, as a State party to the CTBT, calls on annex 2 states to ratify it promptly. As a State party to the NPT, Kenya reaffirms its commitment to nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and a world without nuclear weapons. Similarly, Kenya supports the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and urges multilateral dialogue and renewed commitment to disarmament.

Kenya, as a State party to the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty, recognizes regional zones as building blocks towards a safer world. We encourage efforts to establish such zones globally.

We respect States' rights to peaceful nuclear technology but emphasize adherence to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards. Kenya, as an IAEA member, supports equitable access to technology, particularly for developing countries.

I emphasize, in conclusion, that Kenya remains committed to working with United Nations Member States for a nuclear-weapon-free world. We hope that soon we will break the disarmament machinery deadlock which has persisted for too long.

Mr. Zlenko (Ukraine): Ukraine aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of the European Union (see A/C.1/78/PV.11) and now would like to make some remarks in its national capacity.

Ukraine has been always actively engaged in the global process of nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament, making a historic contribution to that cause.

We recognize the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) as the cornerstone of the nuclear non-proliferation regime. Ukraine emphasizes the need to reach progress towards the full implementation of

article VI, including through the overall reduction in the global stockpile of nuclear weapons.

Ukraine fully supports the efforts of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in the universalization of its safeguards implementation mechanism and highly values the important role that the Agency plays in coordinating international efforts to secure the nuclear non-proliferation regime and to facilitate the peaceful use of nuclear energy worldwide.

We recognize that the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) remains one of the key elements of the global security architecture in the field of nuclear arms limitation. The entry into force of the CTBT remains a matter of priority. We call on all States that have yet to sign or ratify the CTBT, especially annex 2 States, to do so as soon as possible.

Ukraine also calls for the immediate commencement and early conclusion of negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament of a Treaty banning the production of fissile material for use in nuclear weapons or other explosive devices.

At this very moment, as we speak in this Hall about global security, Russia is bombing cities indiscriminately in Ukraine and continues to illegally occupy the largest nuclear power plant in Europe, the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant. Nuclear blackmail has been one of the tools that Russia has explored since the very beginning of its unprovoked and unjustified full-scale war of aggression against Ukraine, in flagrant violation of the Charter of the United Nations. The occupation of the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant by Russia continues to pose grave risks to the nuclear safety and security of Ukraine and the whole region. We recall that the only guarantee to avoid nuclear catastrophe is for the Russian forces and its civil personnel to withdraw completely from the temporarily occupied Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant and return the full control of the station to Ukraine.

During the first days of its invasion of Ukraine, Russia increased the level alert of its nuclear forces. Moscow has also been engaged in irresponsible nuclear rhetoric.

It is worth noting that Russia was the only country that blocked the consensus on the outcome document of the tenth NPT Review Conference in August 2022.

Earlier this year, the Russian Federation declared its readiness to conduct a nuclear-weapon test, suspended

its participation in the New START Treaty, as well as announced the deployment of its non-strategic nuclear weapons on the territory of Belarus, following the agreement signed between the two countries. Most recently, Russia has announced its intention to reconsider the ratification of the CTBT.

All Russia's actions and statements are contrary to the joint statement, of 3 January 2022, of the leaders of the five nuclear-weapon States on preventing nuclear war and avoiding arms races. The Kremlin is ready to undermine the entire architecture of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, as well as the basic principles of the NPT and the international security system as a whole. What is clear, however, is that the Kremlin is not ready to halt its violations of the Charter of the United Nations and return to the tenets of international law. It is therefore critically important for all responsible nations not to fall for the Russian nuclear sabre-rattling and to consolidate the joint and decisive actions to ensure reliable deterrence and prevent further erosion of the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation architecture by Russia.

We recall that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea cannot have the status of a nuclear-weapon State under the NPT. Ukraine urges the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to abandon its nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction, including its ballistic missiles and related programmes, in a complete, verifiable and irreversible manner in accordance with relevant Security Council resolutions. We also reiterate our call on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to return to compliance with the NPT and its Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement with IAEA and to sign and ratify an additional protocol thereto, as well as to sign and ratify the CTBT without any preconditions or further delay. The issue of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action also remains a matter of deep concern for the international community and still depends on Iran's compliance with its obligations under the JCPOA.

Mr. Kim Sunghoon (Republic of Korea): The Republic of Korea echoes the urgent need for tangible progress in nuclear disarmament, as rightly highlighted by a number of countries during the general debate. Whereas nuclear disarmament is a shared responsibility, the leading role of nuclear-weapon States is undeniably of particular importance. The Republic of Korea adds its voice to calling for the full implementation of last year's joint statement by the leaders of the five permanent members of the Security Council (P5),

which reaffirmed their commitment to article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). We continue to expect the P5 to engage in dialogue in an expedited manner in order to advance nuclear disarmament and risk reduction. We therefore welcome the high-level exchanges between the United States and China this year and call for the expansion of that bilateral engagement in good faith. We also join others in urging the Russian Federation to resume its full implementation of the New START Treaty without further delay.

No State should resort to nuclear blackmail or reverse the long-respected trend of nuclear arms reductions. Irresponsible nuclear rhetoric against non-nuclear-weapon States in particular is detrimental not only to nuclear disarmament but also to nuclear non-proliferation. The reports of a rapid and opaque nuclear build-up are also a source of grave concern to the international community. That brings us to the issue of transparency in terms of both declaratory nuclear doctrine and actual nuclear capabilities. Enhanced transparency is in itself a meaningful step in nuclear risk reduction that provides the basis upon which to build concrete nuclear disarmament measures. In that regard, we welcome the nuclear transparency measures taken by some nuclear-weapon States and urge others to follow suit. Renewed efforts are called for to ensure the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and the commencement of negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty. We support the draft resolutions proposed for that purpose (A/C.1/78/L.12 and A/C.1/78/L.45), which, inter alia, urge all States to declare and maintain a moratorium on nuclear testing and the production of weapons-grade fissile material as essential interim measures. We also express our serious concern with regard to the Russian Federation's recent remarks implying the possibility of its withdrawal from the CTBT. We urge Russia to remain as a ratifying State and reaffirm its moratorium on nuclear testing.

At the same time, the Republic of Korea believes that negative security assurances can contribute substantially to nuclear non-proliferation, in that such assurances could reduce the non-nuclear-weapon States' incentives for acquiring nuclear weapons. However, we maintain the principle that such assurances should be applied only to those that faithfully comply with the NPT as non-nuclear-weapon States.

Together with our efforts to promote nuclear disarmament, we must continue to respond in a unified

and resolute manner against proliferators. We must be mindful that the decades-long obsession of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea with nuclear and missile programmes and its unprecedented level of provocations — having launched more than 100 missiles since 2022 in violation of international law, including multiple Security Council resolutions — threatens the international nuclear non-proliferation regime. We strongly urge the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to abandon all nuclear weapons, ballistic missiles and related programmes in a complete, verifiable and irreversible manner, fully comply with the relevant Security Council resolutions and return to dialogue. We also call on all Member States to faithfully implement all relevant Security Council resolutions. With regard to Iran and the deadlock in the restoration of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action and the troubling report (GOV/2023/58) of the Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency, we hope to see progress that will allow the international community to regain confidence in the exclusively peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear programme.

The tall order to realize a world without nuclear weapons requires effective multilateralism, as it is a collaborative endeavour that requires pragmatic and step-by-step approaches. We must continue to make various efforts to make meaningful progress, however small, and bridge the gap between nuclear-weapon States and the non-nuclear weapon States, including through relevant approaches such as the Stockholm Initiative on Nuclear Disarmament and the Creating an Environment for Nuclear Disarmament initiative.

My delegation would like to conclude by reaffirming our readiness to engage with all delegations as constructively as possible.

Ms. Kesse Antwi (Ghana): My delegation aligns itself with the statements delivered by the representatives of Indonesia and Nigeria on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and the Group of African States, respectively (see A/C.1/78/PV.11).

As we gather here today to address the critical issue of nuclear disarmament, we are confronted by a stark reality. Despite our collective aspirations and the international commitments that we have made, the status of nuclear disarmament remains far from the ideal we envision. There still exist some 12,500 nuclear warheads worldwide. Those arsenals are characterized not only by their sheer number but

also by the disconcerting trends of modernization, the development of new delivery systems and the continuous improvement of existing nuclear weapons. Equally concerning, we are witnessing a growing surge in dangerous rhetoric and veiled threats, which has further exacerbated the already precarious situation.

We must recognize that our genuine desire for a peaceful world, which is often articulated within this forum, must be manifested through our actions. Failing to take corrective measures today may lead us to a point of no return, so that the pursuit of peace tomorrow will become increasingly elusive. For that reason, the international community cannot turn a blind eye to the disconcerting reality of the trend of nuclear-arsenal modernization and new-weapon development, as it jeopardizes global security and the fundamental values of humankind. Therefore, in this hour of uncertainty, Ghana reiterates its call on nuclear-weapon States to uphold their disarmament obligations under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), as well as their undertakings towards eliminating their nuclear arsenals completely, transparently, irreversibly and in a manner that is internationally verifiable.

We further reaffirm the importance of various treaties and agreements that constrain nuclear-weapon activities, including the NPT, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, the New START Treaty, Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) and the proposed fissile material cut-off treaty. Ghana underscores the pivotal role of the NPT in nuclear disarmament, nuclear non-proliferation and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. The three pillars of the NPT must be pursued concurrently and not at the expense of one another. We reiterate that non-proliferation policies should never undermine the inalienable right of States to access nuclear material and technology for peaceful purposes. We stress that the peaceful development of nuclear technology must be conducted under the supervision of the International Atomic Energy Agency and in full compliance with its safeguards, additional protocols and verification regimes. Meanwhile, the goals of peaceful uses should not be misused for proliferation purposes.

We emphasize the importance of nuclear-weapon-free zones towards nuclear disarmament and their enabling treaties, such as the Treaty of Pelindaba. In that regard, we welcome and acknowledge the progress made following the convening of the various sessions of the Conference on the Establishment of a

Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction.

The deteriorating security situation provides an additional and pressing incentive for banning the production of fissile material. We recall that the commencement of negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty was agreed as one of the 13 practical steps towards disarmament at the 2000 NPT Review Conference. We underscore that banning the production of fissile materials is crucial for reducing nuclear risks.

In conclusion, we stress the importance and significance of dialogue, multilateralism and collective endeavours towards nuclear disarmament. Through cooperation and resolute dedication, we can overcome the formidable challenges ahead, recognizing that nuclear weapons pose a continued threat to humankind.

Mr. Ichiro (Japan): The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is the cornerstone of global nuclear non-proliferation, the disarmament architecture and our common efforts to achieve a world without nuclear weapons. However, the path towards that common goal is becoming more arduous, given the serious challenges posed to the international security environment, including the series of destabilizing and escalatory rhetoric and acts by the Russian Federation in the course of its illegal, unprovoked aggression against Ukraine, as well as China's accelerating build-up of its nuclear arsenal without transparency or meaningful dialogue.

Maintaining and strengthening the NPT is in the interests of the entire international community. Japan will continue to advance realistic and practical efforts in line with the Hiroshima Action Plan, which the Japanese Prime Minister, Mr. Fumio Kishida, announced last year.

Within that approach, Japan prioritizes both qualitative capping — by comprehensively banning nuclear testing — and quantitative capping — by banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear-explosive devices. We believe that the instruments that most effectively realize qualitative and quantitative capping are the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and a fissile material cut-off treaty, respectively. To that end, Australia, Japan and the Philippines co-hosted a high-level event to refocus political attention on a fissile material cut-off treaty during the high-level week of the current session of the General Assembly. In that

connection, we are deeply concerned by Russia's recent announcements about the possibility of revoking its ratification of the CTBT.

Driven by Prime Minister Kishida's strong commitment to nuclear disarmament, Japan has again submitted a draft resolution entitled "Steps to building a common road map towards a world without nuclear weapons" (A/C.1/78/L.30), which presents a fundamental way forward towards a world without nuclear weapons under the current international circumstances. The risk of the use of nuclear weapons is at its highest since the peak of the Cold War. Furthermore, there are serious divisions among States in their approaches towards nuclear disarmament and a lack of confidence in the security environment. In that difficult situation, we revised this year's draft resolution by adding some new, strengthened language on concrete disarmament measures in order to advance efforts in favour of a world without nuclear weapons and create new momentum for nuclear disarmament. Japan hopes that the realistic approach proposed in the draft resolution will gain the widest possible support from Member States and create new momentum for nuclear disarmament ahead of the eleventh NPT Review Conference.

Japan is seriously concerned about the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's intensified nuclear and missile activities, which pose a grave threat to the international community. It is essential for the international community to be united and fully implement the relevant Security Council resolutions in order to achieve the complete, verifiable and irreversible dismantlement of all the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missiles of all ranges. Japan urges North Korea to abide by all relevant Security Council resolutions and to return at an early date to full compliance with the NPT and International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards.

At the Group of Seven (G7) Summit held in Hiroshima in May, the G7 leaders visited the city bombed by nuclear weapons and listened to the voices of the *hibakusha*, seeing at first hand the effects of the use of nuclear weapons and the aspirations of the people for peace. Conveying the reality of the atomic bombings to the world is the starting point of all efforts towards nuclear disarmament. With the *hibakusha*, we will continue to convey the reality of the use of nuclear weapons beyond generations, including through our Youth Leader Fund for a World without Nuclear Weapons.

Mr. Duffy (Ireland): Ireland aligns itself with the statements delivered by the observer of the European Union, the representative of Mexico, on behalf of the States parties to and signatories of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (see A/C.1/78/PV.11), and the representative of Brazil on behalf of a group of States on nuclear disarmament verification.

Nuclear weapons are an existential problem that demands cooperative and multilateral solutions. The First Committee meets at a time of nuclear danger.

Ireland strongly condemns Russia's nuclear threats and its war of aggression against Ukraine. Any use of nuclear weapons would result in devastating humanitarian consequences with global impact. We underline our support for the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to help ensure nuclear safety and security in Ukraine. Russia's illegal seizure and occupation of the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant has created unacceptable risks. The Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant must be returned to Ukrainian control.

Ireland calls on Russia to resume the full implementation of the New START Treaty. Furthermore, Russia's announced deployment of nuclear weapons to Belarus is a dangerous escalation. We call for that decision to be reversed.

Security doctrines are assuming a greater reliance on nuclear weapons, and nuclear arsenals are increasing in number and diversity. Those trends must be reversed. The alternative is a new nuclear arms race.

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is the cornerstone of disarmament and non-proliferation. The unequivocal undertaking by the nuclear-weapon States to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals remains essential and urgent. The recent sessions of the NPT working group and the Preparatory Committee for the eleventh NPT Review Conference were prevented from delivering consensus outcomes. However, we are encouraged by their focus on transparency and accountability. The call for progress must be met.

Twenty-five years ago, the New Agenda Coalition was launched. We encourage all States to support the draft resolution on nuclear disarmament (A/C.1/78/L.33) submitted by the New Agenda Coalition.

We look forward to the second Meeting of States Parties to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). The TPNW is fully compatible

with and complementary to the NPT. It constitutes an effective measure for realizing the NPT's disarmament provisions. We encourage all States to support the TPNW and the draft resolutions on humanitarian consequences (A/C.1/78/L.23, A/C.1/78/L.32 and A/C.1/78/L.52).

The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) is integral to our work. Until its entry into force, all States must uphold the global norm established against nuclear testing and abide by all testing moratoriums. We call on the eight remaining annex 2 States to join the CTBT. We welcome the recent ratifications by non-annex 2 States. Russia's comments on its potential de-ratification of the CTBT are dangerous. We call on Russia not to proceed with that.

Ireland reiterates the essential role of nuclear-weapon-free zones for international and regional peace and security. Ireland supports the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction and is encouraged by the outcomes of the United Nations-mandated conferences to date.

The IAEA's role in nuclear energy safety and security is indispensable. Its comprehensive safeguards agreements and additional protocol constitute the current verification standards. We urge States developing their civilian nuclear programmes to amend or rescind their small quantities protocols and to sign and ratify the additional protocol as a matter of priority.

Ireland recognizes the contribution of export control regimes to non-proliferation, including the Nuclear Suppliers Group and the Missile Technology Control Regime, as well as The Hague Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation. They contribute to a safer world; any narrative that suggests that such regimes inhibit legitimate trade is baseless.

We are deeply concerned by Iran's nuclear activities, which are inconsistent with the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). They raise very serious proliferation risks. Iran and the international community must work urgently to reduce the risk of nuclear proliferation and de-escalate regional tensions. The full implementation by Iran of the JCPOA is essential, including through full cooperation with the IAEA on monitoring and verification and resolving outstanding safeguards issues.

Ireland urges the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to end its unlawful weapons of mass

destruction and ballistic missile programmes. We call on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to fully dismantle its nuclear programme in a complete, verifiable and irreversible manner. We urge the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to immediately sign and ratify the CTBT, return to compliance with its obligations under the NPT and cooperate fully with the IAEA.

Ireland will continue to work to strengthen the incorporation of gender perspectives in disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control forums. We will continue to highlight the disproportionate impact of ionizing radiation on women and girls.

We must work in unity to address the global challenges we face. Nuclear weapons afford us neither security nor safety. Their indefinite possession contradicts the purpose of our shared work. The only guarantee of safety from nuclear weapons is their complete elimination.

Mr. Del Rosario Vela (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): Spain aligns itself with the statements delivered by the observer of the European Union (see A/C.1/78/PV.11) and the representative of Australia.

The nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime is undergoing its most complex period since the end of the Cold War. The irresponsible and unwarranted nuclear rhetoric used by the Russian Federation in the context of its aggression against Ukraine, its violation of the security assurances provided by the Budapest Memorandum, its decisions, which are incompatible with the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty, and its statements on the possibility of carrying out additional nuclear testing all take us further away from the objective of a world free of nuclear weapons. They represent a major step backwards in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation and pose a concrete threat to international peace and security.

Moreover, the obstruction by some delegations of the working documents and final recommendations of the Preparatory Committee for the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) makes it clear that the non-proliferation and disarmament architecture is fragile. However, it is clear that almost all members of the international community are willing to strengthen the NPT and move towards a world free of nuclear weapons, through various options, which enables us to

keep hope alive that the current review cycle, scheduled to end in 2026, will be successful.

Spain maintains its commitment to the review cycle and to strengthening the NPT — the cornerstone of the international non-proliferation regime and the basis on which to champion nuclear disarmament. We defend the relevance of the treaty's three pillars and the need to make balanced progress across all of them.

We must move towards nuclear disarmament. All nuclear-weapon States have a responsibility to honour their disarmament commitments, pursuant to article VI of the NPT. As we make gradual progress towards that goal, we must implement transparency and risk-reduction measures and avoid counter-measures, such as programmes with little transparency and substantial increases in nuclear arsenals.

Contributions made by groups of States, such as the Stockholm Initiative for Nuclear Disarmament, of which Spain is a member, help to reach consensus on specific and gradual steps towards disarmament. In that regard, Spain attaches the utmost importance to negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty within the Conference on Disarmament. Until then, we call for a moratorium on the production of fissile material.

We are deeply concerned about the proliferation crisis. We therefore support the Joint Comprehensive Programme of Action and urge Iran to reach an agreement that leads to full compliance with commitments made and cooperate fully with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in order to resolve the outstanding issues on its Safeguards Agreement.

North Korea must comply with all Security Council resolutions, end its nuclear and missile tests and apply its Safeguards Agreement, as a step towards complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization.

Spain firmly supports all initiatives leading to nuclear non-proliferation. We welcome steps towards the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons in the Middle East. We welcome the holding of the first three sessions of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction and trust that the process will run its course and bring onboard all relevant regional and international stakeholders.

The entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty is crucial. We support the Executive Secretary's efforts to bring about the universalization

of the treaty. We welcome the recent ratifications and urge the annex 2 States that have not yet done so to sign and ratify the treaty. Spain calls upon all States that have ratified the treaty to honour their commitments and refrain from any action that is at odds with its goals and purpose. Until it enters into force, we will continue to champion the current international moratorium.

Export control regimes are also crucial for non-proliferation. They include the Zangger Committee and the Nuclear Suppliers Group, which provide guidelines for the transfer of nuclear technology and material and work to acquire them and promote technological developments, thereby contributing to maintaining predictability and transparency in the international nuclear trade.

Spain appreciates the role of the IAEA in ensuring non-proliferation through its safeguards regimes. We defend the universalization of safeguards agreements, together with the additional protocol and international standards of verification and transparency.

My delegation believes that the gender dimension is a priority in the area of nuclear disarmament. Spain supports and promotes, among other things, the equal participation and leadership of men and women.

Lastly, it is important to underscore the importance of compliance with Security Council resolution 1540 (2004). We intend to work actively in the context of the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism and the Proliferation Security Initiative.

Mr. Tawfic Ouro-tagba (Togo) (*spoke in French*): The Togolese delegation would like to begin by congratulating you, Mr. Chair, and the other members of the Bureau on your elections. We commend your leadership in the conduct of our work and assure you of our support as you carry out your duties.

My delegation aligns itself with the statements made by the representatives of Indonesia and Nigeria on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and the Group of African States, respectively (see A/C.1/78/PV.11), and would like to make the following comments in its national capacity.

The total elimination of nuclear weapons and the legally binding assurance that they will never be produced again remain the only absolute guarantees against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. In that regard, we must not only build on the historic achievements of our long march towards nuclear

disarmament but also demonstrate our willingness to achieve our objectives as soon as possible.

We must therefore re-establish the practice of consensus and reaffirm our staunch commitment to the objective of nuclear disarmament so as to ensure that the upcoming Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) does not end in failure, as was the case with the two previous Conferences. We also call for full respect for the commitments under the NPT, specifically the legal obligations in article VI that are binding on nuclear-weapon States.

With regard to fissile material, we support the ban on the production of fissile material for the manufacture of nuclear weapons and other nuclear-explosive devices, as well as the total elimination of past production and existing stockpiles.

With regard to nuclear testing, my delegation reiterates the importance of ensuring the universalization of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty as soon as possible, through the ratification of the Treaty by annex 2 States. Togo also welcomes once again the consensus-based adoption of a declaration and action plan following the first meeting of States Parties to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. We hope that the next meeting will enable us to build on the achievements of the treaty and move us closer to the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

On behalf of my country, which is party to the Treaty of Pelindaba, I would like to reiterate the central role of nuclear-weapon-free zones in the area of nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament and the need to ensure that no region of the world is excluded.

As a developing country that is a State party to the NPT, Togo reiterates its commitment to the promotion of international cooperation for the peaceful use of nuclear energy in order to guarantee the inalienable rights of all parties to the treaty to develop research, production and the peaceful use of nuclear energy, without discrimination. In that context, my country benefited this year from technical assistance from the International Atomic Energy Agency to develop a draft decree outlining the safety and security measures to be used when transporting radioactive material. I would like to call for enhanced cooperation, which could assist in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

In conclusion, I would like to remind everyone about the urgent call made from the President of the General Assembly on the occasion of the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons:

“There is only one path to avoid nuclear Armageddon: that is the complete and absolute elimination of nuclear weapons.”

Mr. Thöni (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): Nuclear weapons are an existential threat to humankind. The threat can be removed only through their total elimination. Until we achieve that goal, it is vital to strengthen the existing standards concerning the proliferation and use of nuclear weapons, as well as to adopt measures that mitigate the threat that they pose. Switzerland welcomes the recommendations in that regard by the Secretary-General in his New Agenda for Peace. In that context, I would like to underscore five points.

First, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is under severe pressure. We need to return to a functional and productive review process of the treaty. Switzerland, Ireland and New Zealand, along with 25 other States, have proposed measures for strengthening the transparency and accountability of the NPT review process. Implementing those measures would enable States parties to better assess progress in the implementation of the treaty. We reiterate our support for the remarks made by the Chair of the first session of the Preparatory Committee for the eleventh NPT Review Conference with regard to the potential topics to be discussed at its subsequent sessions.

Secondly, we are concerned about the continued erosion of the nuclear arms control architecture. The disarmament process has stalled, and the nuclear-weapon States are all modernizing their arsenals. In addition, one nuclear-weapon State is reportedly expanding its arsenal, in violation with its obligations and commitments under the NPT. Other nuclear-weapon States are further increasing their stockpiles. A renewal of dialogue is necessary to develop a common understanding on future arms control instruments.

Thirdly, the norms governing nuclear weapons, primarily the norm against their use, must be further strengthened. We need clear assurances, now more than ever, that nuclear weapons will never be used again, in particular in view of the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of their use. It would therefore be largely inconceivable for the use of nuclear weapons to be in

compliance with the relevant provisions of international law, especially international humanitarian law. Reducing the role and significance of nuclear weapons in military doctrines and policies plays an important role in preventing the use of those weapons. We call on all nuclear-weapon States to place the greatest emphasis possible on nuclear restraint in their doctrines.

We also need to strengthen the norm against nuclear testing. We call on all the annex 2 States listed in the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) to sign and ratify the treaty without delay. We echo the Executive Secretary's concern that it would be deeply unfortunate if any signatory State were to consider revoking its ratification of the CTBT, which would run counter to the renewed increase in ratifications in recent years. Similarly, we call for the start of the long-overdue negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty.

Fourthly, we must uphold the norm of non-proliferation. Switzerland once again expresses its disappointment that an agreement has not yet been reached by all the parties on a return to the full implementation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). We once again call on Iran to reverse the steps it has taken and to return to the full implementation of its commitments under the JCPOA without delay. Similarly, Switzerland remains deeply concerned about the continuation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's nuclear and ballistic-missile programmes and condemns its missile tests, in violation of the Security Council's resolutions. We urge the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to refrain from engaging in any nuclear tests, sign and ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and return to compliance with the NPT and its Safeguards Agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency as soon as possible.

Fifthly, nuclear risks have increased in recent years. Russia's military aggression against Ukraine, in addition to Russia's announcement to deploy nuclear weapons on the territory of Belarus, have been accompanied by nuclear threats and inflammatory rhetoric. In addition to the specific risks associated with an armed conflict involving nuclear-weapon States, we are also facing novel nuclear risks related to emerging technologies, such as the integration of artificial intelligence into nuclear command and control structures. Against that backdrop, we support practical steps to advance nuclear risk reduction, such as establishing and maintaining resilient lines of communication. We urge nuclear-

weapon States to achieve concrete results on that issue, including through the P5 Process.

Later this year, Switzerland will participate in the second Meeting of States Parties of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). We will continue to follow with interest the positions of TPNW States parties with regard to its complementarity with the NPT.

Mr. Ghorbanpour Najafabadi (Islamic Republic of Iran): My delegation aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/78/PV.11).

The existence of nuclear weapons continues to exacerbate global tensions and poses an existential threat to humankind. We emphasize the clear, legally binding obligation of the nuclear-weapon States to achieve complete nuclear disarmament without imposing conditions, as suggested by some of those countries. The deteriorating international security situation underscores the urgency of implementing those obligations with a defined timeline. Non-nuclear-weapon States joined the NPT with the expectation that they would not be targeted or threatened with nuclear weapons. Therefore, the General Assembly, in adopting the NPT, called for the consideration of a proposal requiring nuclear-weapon States to provide assurances that they would not use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States. The NPT aims to ensure the security of all nations, and not the nuclear monopoly of a select few.

Iran emphasizes that the only safeguard against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons is their complete, irreversible, and verifiable elimination in accordance with article VI of the NPT. Until then, non-nuclear-weapon States are entitled to receive unconditional, universal, irreversible, credible and legally binding assurances against the use or threat of nuclear weapons — and simultaneously, nuclear-weapon States are obligated to provide those assurances. The Conference on Disarmament should prioritize the creation of a document that would outline those assurances.

Nuclear disarmament is of paramount importance to the international community. The proliferation of nuclear weapons and arsenals contradicts the clear commitments made by nuclear-weapon States. Regrettably, after five decades, article VI of the NPT

still lacks any implementation. The expansion of nuclear arsenals poses a grave threat to global peace, emphasizing the need for nuclear-weapon States to fulfil their commitments on disarmament under article VI. In that vein, the United States, the United Kingdom and NATO, acting as a nuclear military alliance, are the main culprits for the weakening, and even prevention, of any progress towards nuclear disarmament.

Iran, which initiated the idea of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, expresses serious concerns about Israel's clandestine military nuclear programme. The Israeli regime's refusal to join the NPT and subject its nuclear activities to safeguards poses a permanent threat to international peace and security. That situation not only destabilizes the region but also undermines the integrity and credibility of the NPT and safeguards. The regime's threats against Iran's peaceful nuclear activities violate the Statute of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the Charter of the United Nations. The international community should strongly condemn such threats.

The Israeli regime, with the support of certain States, has been fabricating allegations to divert attention from its nuclear arsenal. The recent statement by the regime's Prime Minister at the General Assembly, in which he openly advocated for a credible nuclear threat against Iran (see A/78/PV.10), demands a strong international response. The international community must hold that regime accountable and urge it to renounce nuclear weapons, join the NPT and subject its nuclear facilities to IAEA safeguards. Iran emphasizes its unwavering commitment to cooperating with the IAEA, through the robust verification and monitoring activities that are in place. Iran has been a victim of sabotage in its peaceful nuclear industry and expects the IAEA to condemn such acts and threats.

Following the United States withdrawal from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action five years ago, the illegal sanctions have continued. It is time to reverse course, end the political and psychological pressure on Iran's peaceful nuclear programme and lift the unfounded allegations. Those responsible for those conditions must cease their unproductive actions and remove their illegal sanctions.

In conclusion, Iran, as penholder, will submit a biennial draft resolution (A/C.1/78/L.17) on the follow-up of nuclear disarmament obligations agreed to at the NPT Review Conferences.

Ms. Maayan (Israel): The foundations of arms control and non-proliferation continue to be challenged by certain States. What begins with a general lack of commitment and continues with blatant non-compliance with fundamental legal obligations ultimately undermines the bedrock upon which international security is built. Israel continues to support the global efforts of nuclear non-proliferation and contributes to nuclear safety, security and non-proliferation activities, including within the frameworks of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization.

Furthermore, Israel is a member of the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism and of the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material, including the 2005 amendment, and endorses the IAEA Code of Conduct on the Safety and Security of Radioactive Sources.

Israel values the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and recognizes its contribution to the non-proliferation regime. Nevertheless, any non-proliferation regime is only as effective as the level of compliance of its members. Unfortunately, the NPT in itself does not provide a remedy for the unique security challenges of the Middle East, let alone the repeated violations of the Treaty by some of its member States. Four of the five cases of serious violations of the NPT, since its entry into force, took place in the Middle East.

For decades now, Iran has been rapidly advancing its military nuclear programme and already possesses large quantities of highly enriched uranium, material for which there is absolutely no civilian justification. Concurrently, Iran is progressing significantly in producing uranium metal, and is developing and industrializing advanced centrifuges.

Returning to an agreed framework while allowing Iran to maintain its know-how and capabilities will only take the pressure off Iran to comply with its commitments and international law. Iran has proven beyond a doubt that it uses negotiations only as a tool to buy time in its pursuit of completing its military nuclear programme, on which it has never given up.

Parallel to its nuclear pursuit, Iran continued to violate its IAEA Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement obligations and avoids providing adequate answers on investigations concerning its undeclared nuclear material activity. We call upon the international community to demand that Iran cooperate with the

Agency in the manner defined in the various IAEA reports and Board of Governors' resolutions.

After witnessing the atrocities that the terrorist organization Hamas committed in Israel in the last week, it is impossible to imagine the extent of destruction that Iranian proxies such as Hamas could cause were they to be shielded by an Iranian nuclear umbrella.

In 2011, the IAEA's Board of Governors adopted a resolution finding Syria to be non-compliant with its safeguards agreement. The existence of an undeclared and uninspected nuclear reactor in Syria represents a dangerous non-compliance precedent. This item on the Board of Governors' agenda remains worrisome, as do the open questions related to the nature and operational status of the specific sites and materials within Syria.

Finally, the 1999 Report of the Disarmament Commission (A/54/42), on guidelines and principles for the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones, clearly states that nuclear-weapon-free zones should be established on the basis of arrangements "freely arrived at among the States of the region concerned" and "pursued by all the States of that region". Ill-motivated initiatives, such as the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction, go against the guidelines and established principles of any nuclear-weapon-free zones and are unhelpful.

Unfortunately, as demonstrated again over the past couple of days, the Middle East continues to struggle with instability, deep-rooted hatred, terror, violence and a basic rejection of Israel's right to exist and its people right to live in peace, security and stability. In facing such a reality, Israel has the fundamental obligation to protect its civilians, its existence and can rely only on itself to do so. Israel has no intention of entrusting its national security to global arrangements, which in our reality in the Middle East, constitutes more of a basis for violations than anything else.

Mr. Viinanen (Finland): In addition to the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union (see A/C.1/78/PV.11), let me make the following statement on behalf of Finland. A full version of the statement will be posted on the First Committee's website.

The First Committee and the international community, on several occasions, have endorsed our common quest to achieve a world free of nuclear weapons. That is a noble but onerous goal. Achieving

it takes extraordinary political will and long-term commitment. Achieving a world free of nuclear weapons requires verifiable and irreversible steps by States possessing nuclear weapons. Disarmament is a gradual process, requiring proper attention for the legitimate security concerns of all participating States.

The Russian war of aggression in Ukraine and the Russian threats of nuclear use undermine efforts for nuclear disarmament. We call again on the Russian Federation to end its war against Ukraine, to withdraw its troops to Russia, to respect Ukraine's sovereignty within its internationally recognized borders and to cease its reckless nuclear threats.

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) continues to serve the international community well. The NPT is the cornerstone of the rules-based international order. It constitutes a legally binding obligation by nuclear-weapon States to advance nuclear disarmament. It is high time to turn that commitment into a reality.

The eleventh review cycle of the NPT got off to a good start in the summer with the first meeting of the Preparatory Committee of the 2026 Review Conference and the working group meeting on further strengthening the review process. While there are diverging views on priorities, all States parties showed strong commitment to the full implementation of the Treaty.

Finland is particularly encouraged by the nearly unanimous support for the need to have increased transparency and accountability on commitments to advance nuclear disarmament. In our view, that holds great promise. We really need to make increased

transparency and accountability a major outcome of the 2026 NPT Review Conference.

We are disappointed and concerned about the Russian decision to suspend its implementation of the New START Treaty. At the same time, Russia is conditioning further steps in nuclear arms control with demands for a sphere of influence. Those demands from the dark days of previous centuries do not belong to the twenty-first century. We are apprehensive of the fact that the Russian Federation is developing and deploying novel and destabilizing nuclear weapons. Russia is moving to revoke its ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and is contemplating returning to nuclear testing. In addition, Russia is further escalating and destabilizing the security situation in Europe by deploying nuclear weapons in Belarus. That is not the behaviour of a responsible nuclear power — rather, the contrary.

We are following with concern China's rapid expansion and the diversification of its nuclear arsenal. Our concern is further exacerbated by China's unwillingness to engage meaningfully on its nuclear build-up. We encourage China to be more responsive and transparent on the matter.

In nuclear disarmament, going forward and avoiding backtracking is more important than knowing the exact time of arrival. In the meantime, let us make sure that nuclear weapons will never be used again.

The Chair: We have exhausted the time available to us for this meeting. The Committee will reconvene at 3 p.m. in this conference room to continue the thematic discussions under the cluster of nuclear weapons.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.