



General Assembly

Seventy-eighth session

First Committee

8th meeting

Tuesday, 10 October 2023, 3 p.m.

New York

Official Records

Chair: Mr. Paulauskas (Lithuania)

*In the absence of the Chair, Ms. Nam (New Zealand),
Vice-Chair, took the Chair.*

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

Agenda items 90 to 106 (continued)

General debate on all disarmament and international security agenda items

The Acting Chair: I would remind delegations that the rolling list of speakers for the thematic discussion will be closed tomorrow, Wednesday, 11 October, at 6 p.m. Therefore, all delegations intending to take the floor during the thematic discussion who have not yet inscribed themselves on the list are encouraged to do so before that deadline.

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

Mr. Jiménez (Nicaragua) (*spoke in Spanish*): We would like to congratulate the Chair and the members of the Bureau on their election. They can count on our full cooperation.

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

In a world in which a number of interrelated crises are deepening and worsening, it is unacceptable that nuclear arsenals continue to be expanded, modernized and developed, putting the human species and all living beings at grave risk. The international community must adopt a new multicentric vision that makes it possible to deepen relations based on agreement and harmony, respecting our sovereignty, independence and self-determination, and deepening unconditional cooperation. That is why we reiterate that all economic and financial resources that are used to modernize nuclear weapons, expand military alliances and further aggression and the destabilization of countries should instead be used to make a collective effort to restore confidence in the United Nations, through international solidarity, in order to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals set out in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and to eradicate poverty and achieve improved human development and a decent life for all peoples.

Nicaragua strongly advocates for general and complete disarmament and is in favour of the total elimination of nuclear weapons for the benefit of humankind. Nicaragua, as a peace-loving country that is seriously committed to maintaining international security, has promoted nuclear disarmament at the United Nations and in other international forums. The Nicaraguan position is a position of principle, and we have demonstrated it through actions by ratifying the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean — the Treaty of

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Tlatelolco. We welcome the successful outcome of the second meeting of States Parties to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which complements article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and contributes to the strengthening of the disarmament and non-proliferation regime.

Nicaragua considers that the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the legality of the threat or use of nuclear weapons, issued on 8 July 1996, continues to be of great importance to nuclear disarmament, because it clearly establishes that States that possess nuclear weapons have the legal obligation to undertake negotiations in good faith aimed at nuclear disarmament in all its aspects and to conclude them as soon as possible. We attach particular importance to compliance with the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons as the legally binding, international consensus-based instrument of the global system of non-proliferation, disarmament and the peaceful use of atomic energy.

From experience, we firmly believe that, through the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones, the non-proliferation regime and international peace and security can be strengthened as an important contribution to achieving nuclear disarmament. At the regional level, we reiterate the importance of the Treaty of Tlatelolco and the validity of the declaration of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States as a zone of peace. We regret the failure to implement the resolution on the conference on the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East and call for its urgent implementation.

We consider it essential to further strengthen the legal regime on outer space in order to ensure security and transparency in the conduct of space activities. In particular, we support the adoption of a treaty to prevent and prohibit the placement of weapons in outer space and the use or threat of use of force against satellites and other space objects. In our view, the draft treaty presented by Russia and China in the Conference on Disarmament is a good basis for negotiations.

Our country is committed to, and has taken the corresponding steps towards, preventing, combating and eradicating illicit arms trafficking. We have incorporated into our national legislation the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and the

International Tracing Instrument through a special law on the control and regulation of firearms, ammunition, explosives and other related materials, known as Law No. 510. The recent launch of the national plan for civilian and human security, which includes a number of meetings with families and communities in the 153 municipalities of the country, with the aim of holding more than 5,000 meetings, continues to demonstrate that civilian and human security is one of Nicaragua's main strengths. Nicaragua is recognized as having a homicide rate of only 7 per 100,000 inhabitants — the lowest rate among the countries of Central America and one of the lowest in Latin America and the world. In that connection, we have developed a series of specific policies and programmes to combat the scourges of our times, including terrorism, organized crime and drugs, arms and human trafficking. We note that international assistance and cooperation are indispensable to the successful implementation of the Programme of Action.

We reject the politicization of the implementation of the Convention on Chemical Weapons and the manipulation of procedures sought in the technical mandate of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons.

We welcome the work of the Open-Ended Working Group, a Russian initiative on information and communication technologies and a historical process that gives all Member States the opportunity to participate and express their views in a transparent manner and on an equal footing on a subject that is relevant to all. We have often pointed out the stagnation of the disarmament machinery. However, as yet, we have been unable to solve the real problem, which is the political will of some States to achieve genuine progress, especially in the field of nuclear disarmament.

Mr. Moretti (Brazil): Allow me to congratulate the Chair of the First Committee, you, Madam Vice-President, and the members of the Bureau on your election.

Brazil currently has the honour of holding the Security Council presidency for the month of October, which brings us some additional perspective as we kick off this session. While there are some important parallels between the Committee's work and the Council's mandate for the maintenance of international peace and security, we are also struck by some of the potential differences.

First, although the Council should also seek to prevent conflicts, its role has often been reactive, responding to crises and trying to find solutions to some of the world's most pressing security problems. In contrast, the General Assembly and the Committee look mostly to the future. Here, we are to lay the conceptual and normative frameworks so as to avoid future security threats. The First Committee's work in peace and security is preventive. Our work here, if done properly, means less work for the Security Council down the line. It is for no other reason that disarmament is an essential component of the collective security framework and organically linked to it. We reflect on those differences today, not as an academic exercise, but because it has a bearing on the committee's work over the next weeks in two significant ways.

The first way is in the importance of raising our level of ambition. Outcomes in the Security Council are often constrained by the realities of any given issue on its agenda and some of its rules. That is partly a function of the Council's mandate and, partly, of the pressing need to give answers, albeit sometimes imperfect, to urgent crises. This forum is different. The First Committee can and should be more ambitious. While recognizing the challenges ahead, we should not be too strictly bound by perceptions of the current security environment to the point of limiting our sight. On the contrary, the reason we gather here every year is precisely to attempt to build a security environment that is more peaceful, stable, predictable and less armed.

If my first message was one of context and ambition, my second message is in the nature of an alert — do not import alien dynamics into the General Assembly. Over the past two years, divisions, in particular in the Security Council, have grown, and space for compromise, unfortunately, has shrunk. The positions of members have hardened. That is regrettable. Nevertheless, we continue to deploy our best efforts to avert and to reverse those trends. Should a similar process unfold in the General Assembly, where the rules of the future are laid out, its consequences could be dire. Inflexibility today perpetuates divisions tomorrow.

We are deeply troubled by the rise of competing processes and by attempts to use votes in this Committee as a scorecard for assessing the relative strength of different perceptions. We are disappointed when we hear rhetoric about finding a single path forward. Yet we see few concrete and sustained attempts at finding real compromises. In the past year, we saw an increased

number of drafts be taken to a vote because sponsors no longer believed they could obtain consensus. Or worse, they might even think it is desirable to mark positions. That trend must stop. Consensus must once again be our default objective in this Committee — even if it sometimes proves elusive and hard to attain.

Despite this, Brazil remains hopeful about the work of the First Committee. The General Assembly presents advantages. The greatest of them, perhaps, is representativeness and inclusivity. By reflecting a more faithful image of global society, the Assembly retains more shades of grey, often obfuscated by the dynamics in the Council. Nowhere are those nuances more apparent than in the large and vibrant middle ground of States that reject polarization and even easy categorization. While often and rightly associated with the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, we see examples of pragmatic actions in cross-cutting groupings such as the New Agenda Coalition, which Brazil was pleased to host in Brasilia, in June, to mark its twenty-fifth anniversary, or in the growing membership of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

These States are far from silent, but they are a majority that continues committed to the task of promoting disarmament. It is no overstatement to say that this middle ground of countries is what has kept the First Committee running and productive in these difficult times. They have anchored this Committee's discussions and served as a powerful backstop against the rising tide of divisions. This middle ground — and there is no term that perfectly describes it — has worked constructively over the past year to approve a global framework on through-life ammunition management, recommendations on promoting transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space and a cyber points of contact directory. It has also continued to make advances in understanding applications of international law to information and communication technologies and artificial intelligence and to push for nuclear disarmament in the face of growing and determined opposition.

There were limits to what was achievable in the past year. We were unable to salvage the nuclear track of the United Nations Disarmament Commission or to reach outcome documents at the Preparatory Committee for the 2026 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, in Vienna, or within the Open-ended Working Group on Reducing Space Threats through Norms, Rules and

Principles of Responsible Behaviours. On the other hand, substantive results were also attained in the Group of Governmental Experts on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems and the Working Group on the Strengthening of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention, as a positive start.

There are indeed some niches where the international community was capable of mustering the necessary political will to achieve progress. That is why one of our main tasks here this year is to further encourage this kind of constructive pragmatism. We will continue to make every effort towards consensus in the draft resolution proposed by Brazil (A/C.1/78/L.33), and we will engage with other draft resolutions in the same spirit of openness, flexibility and constructive search for consensus. We do not prejudge outcomes, authors or sponsors, and we encourage others to follow suit. The First Committee will never be able to agree on everything, and we do not have to. What we need is to ensure that this time the centre will hold.

Mrs. Kuzee (Namibia): Allow me to use this opportunity to congratulate the Chair and the Bureau on their election to chair the First Committee at its seventy-eighth session. I pledge the support and cooperation of my delegation as they carry out their mandate.

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

This session of the Committee's work is convened against the back drop of a highly polarized world, a world where heightened tensions, protracted conflicts and the threat of the use of nuclear weapons are at an all-time high. That is, in part, attributed to the continued modernization of armaments, coupled by increased investment in weapons, ammunition and other armaments. Those actions are contrary to the efforts that support the needs of the world. More than wars and conflicts, the world needs peace — peace that can sustain development and peace that can build bridges of opportunity for future generations.

At its formation, as espoused in the Charter of the United Nations, the Organization was formed to maintain international peace and security and to develop friendly relations among nations. This Committee is charged with a unique responsibility and can build the bridges of peace between nations, on the one hand, and easily drive a wedge between them, on the other.

Most recently, that was evidenced by the failure of two successive Review Conferences of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), which should have us reflecting on our collective commitment to disarmament. Despite that, it is our hope that the new NPT review cycle will give us an opportunity to reinvigorate the NPT. Namibia continues to regard the Treaty as the cornerstone of the non-proliferation regime and the foundation for international cooperation to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons.

For that reason, we remain firm in our resolve to play our part in advancing the principles of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. That is anchored in our conviction that inclusive multilateral cooperation and negotiations among States paves the way for curbing the vertical and horizontal proliferation of nuclear weapons, while mitigating the impact of their humanitarian consequences. That is particularly relevant at a time when we permanently live in the shadows of nuclear catastrophes, fuelled by growing distrust and competition between nuclear powers.

The sheer existence of nuclear weapons creates both the temptation and the risk of their use. As a State party to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), Namibia calls on all States that have not done so to accede to and ratify the TPNW. We remain concerned by the reluctance of nuclear-weapon States to join the TPNW. The TPNW can in earnest contribute to achieving a world free of nuclear weapons, and if we are genuine in our pursuit of disarmament, its universalization is key.

Namibia continues to call for the ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, especially by the annex 2 States, in view of its entry into force. Furthermore, my delegation continues to place great importance on nuclear-weapon-free zones and the value they add to global disarmament and non-proliferation efforts. As a committed State party to the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty—the Treaty of Pelindaba — Namibia supports the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones in all regions of the world. We believe that it constitutes a confidence-building measure and an important step towards achieving nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. For that reason, Namibia calls for the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery in the Middle East, without further delay, as recommended by the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

My delegation is encouraged by the publication of the Secretary-General's New Agenda for Peace and the recommendations contained in the report of the High-Level Advisory Board on Effective Multilateralism. As we chart towards negotiations for the Summit of the Future, peace and security are integral considerations on which we must engage constructively.

Namibia continues to strongly advocate for the advancement of the women and peace and security agenda and regards the gender and disarmament nexus as important. We are particularly encouraged by the efforts to advance the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in the disarmament agenda. As we see the lapse of the first generation of national action plans on women and peace and security, my delegation calls for a formalized mechanism to facilitate reflection and peer learning and evaluate implementation gaps with a view to ensuring enriched second and third generations of national action plans and their successful implementation.

In conclusion, my delegation reiterates its commitment to constructive engagement during this session and will reflect further positions during the thematic discussions.

Mr. Kiboino (Kenya): My delegation congratulates the Chair of the Committee, you, Madam Vice-Chair, and the other members of the Bureau on your elections, and assures you of Kenya's support and cooperation.

Kenya aligns itself with the statements delivered by the representative of Nigeria on behalf of the Group of African States (see A/C.1/78/PV.3) and by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/78/PV.2), and I will make some additional remarks in my national capacity.

Our global peace and security situation is fragile and precarious. The continuing war in Ukraine and the escalating situation in the Middle East are two cases in point. Kenya condemns in the strongest terms all acts of terrorism in all their forms and manifestations as criminal and unjustifiable, regardless of their motivation, wherever, whenever and by whomever they are committed. We deplore the massive civilian fatalities and injuries stemming from the attack by Hamas on 7 October, targeting civilians in Israel, and the subsequent and ongoing violence in Gaza and parts of Israel. We condole with the families of those who have lost their loved ones, both Israelis and Palestinians

alike, and we urge all those concerned to exercise maximum restraint, strictly adhere to international law regarding the protection of civilians, de-escalate and give a chance to dialogue and diplomacy, guided by the Charter of the United Nations and the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council.

Seven decades ago, the General Assembly adopted its first resolution ((resolution 1 (I)), calling for the elimination from national armaments of atomic weapons and all other major weapons adaptable to mass destruction. Regrettably, to date, the urgency of that call to disarmament remains largely unheeded. Disarmament commitments cannot be optional. They demand our urgent, collective attention and unwavering dedication. The absolute guarantee against the use of nuclear weapons lies in their total elimination. The reality of the catastrophic consequences of a nuclear detonation should spark an urgency for constructive engagement, political will and the full implementation of the relevant multilateral legal obligations and commitments until the goal of the total elimination of nuclear weapons is achieved.

Kenya reiterates its enduring commitment to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. As a State party to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, we urge all annex 2 States to ratify the Treaty in order to hasten its entry into force. Additionally, we emphasize the importance of respecting the inalienable right of all States to pursue peaceful nuclear technology research within the context of article IV of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and under the supervision of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Capacity-building and equitable access to technology must also be promoted. In this digital era, in which technology's ubiquity poses serious security challenges, it is crucial to strike a balance between innovation and preventing malicious use. Cybersecurity cannot be a single-country endeavour. It is a shared global responsibility that must be undertaken through a multilateral approach. There is a need for the United Nations to support nations in building digital capacity and address the consequences of the digital revolution, including the misuse of artificial intelligence, big data and social media. We commend the progress made by the Open-Ended Working Group on Security of and in the Use of Information and Communications Technologies 2021–2025, chaired by Singapore, and we anticipate continued tangible outcomes in that vital area.

Kenya joins other delegations in expressing concern about and cautioning against an arms race in outer space. Member States must avoid and prevent any tendency to turn outer space into a domain of warfare and armed conflict. We emphasize the need to promote and strengthen international cooperation in the exploration and use of outer space for peaceful purposes. In that regard, we join in the call for negotiations for a legal framework that not only prevents an arms race in outer space but also ensures equal opportunities in space exploration for all nations.

Addressing the devastating impact of illicit small arms and light weapons on global peace and security demands robust collaborative efforts among United Nations bodies, regional organizations, national Governments and the relevant non-State actors. We call for a comprehensive architecture built through collaboration and coordination among those stakeholders, with a view to strengthening regional and national initiatives on critical aspects, including the secure storage of weapons and ammunition, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, and the sensitization, collection and destruction of illicit small arms and light weapons. Strengthening the capacity of United Nations missions and Governments in weapons and ammunition management is also critical to preventing the diversion and illicit trade of small arms and light weapons.

In conclusion, Kenya pledges its unwavering commitment to constructive engagement on matters of disarmament and international security. Let us stand united in efforts to create a safer and more peaceful world for current and future generations.

Mrs. Ndiaye (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): My delegation aligns itself with the statements made by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/78/PV.2) and by the representative of Nigeria on behalf of the Group of African States (see A/C.1/78/PV.3).

I would like to take this opportunity to extend my warmest congratulations to the Chair on his election as Chair of the First Committee and to assure him of the Senegalese delegation's full support and cooperation.

The work of the seventy-eighth session begins in a difficult international context. Weapons continue to pose a serious threat to peace and security, eroding day by day the few glimmers of hope we once had on the issue of disarmament. With

its first resolution, adopted on 24 January 1946 (resolution 1 (I)), the General Assembly, by creating a Commission responsible for dealing with the problems raised by the discovery of atomic energy, was already seeking to combat nuclear proliferation. Currently, the improvement of nuclear weapons continues to commandeer human ingenuity and considerable resources, to the detriment of sustainable development. In addition, we are witnessing a resurgence of geopolitical tensions and the rise of unilateralism induced by scepticism and frustration about multilateralism's effectiveness.

All disarmament forums find themselves in a state of chronic paralysis. That is the case for the Conference on Disarmament and the Disarmament Commission, which are permeated by a lethargy that led to the failure of the tenth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), which was not able to reach consensus on a final document. The mixed results from the first preparatory session for the eleventh Review Conference are hardly reassuring with respect to our ability to overcome our differences.

It is therefore urgent to reverse that negative trend. To do so, there is no alternative to strong multilateral cooperation on all issues pertaining to arms control and disarmament. We must reaffirm our determination and political will to advance towards achieving the goal of the immediate, complete, irreversible and verifiable elimination of nuclear weapons. Must we recall that it is the only option to protect the world against the devastation and misery that could result from the use of such weapons? It is the responsibility of nuclear-weapon States to agree on a more realistic and ambitious programme for reducing their nuclear arsenals. In addition, non-proliferation measures must be strengthened, and negative security guarantees granted to non-nuclear-weapon States.

Finally, we should not forget that disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation, which constitute the first two pillars of the NPT, are two interdependent and equally important objectives. There can be no general and complete disarmament if nuclear-weapon States continue to modernize their atomic arsenals and if other countries circumvent the legal instruments in force to acquire them.

For its part, Senegal remains committed to that objective, which is why it has ratified the main instruments establishing the international non-proliferation and nuclear security regime, in

particular the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons; the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty; the Pelindaba Treaty, on an African nuclear-weapon-free zone; and the Convention on Nuclear Safety. My country believes that the NPT must remain the cornerstone of disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation and therefore must benefit from the constant support of all Member States. Furthermore, we must make headway in the implementation of international instruments relating to the prohibition of biological, chemical and radiological weapons which, like nuclear weapons, threaten the survival of humankind.

Finally, my delegation remains convinced that the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, as stipulated in article IV of the NPT, can be a catalyst for the economic emergence of countries of the global South. Indeed, energy, health, industry, agriculture and other related sectors could benefit from nuclear technology and should therefore be the beneficiary of strong cooperation between the International Atomic Energy Agency and its member States, particularly with regard to knowledge transfer.

The creation of nuclear-free zones must also be further encouraged. Such zones contribute to improving regional security environments and therefore constitute significant instruments for the establishment of a world free from nuclear weapons. I take this opportunity to reiterate Senegal's attachment to the Pelindaba Treaty, which consolidates the status of Africa as a nuclear-weapon-free zone. In the same vein, my country fully supports the project to create a zone free from 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 Iranian nuclear power and the agreements on the limitation of strategic offensive arms in Europe, just as it remains important to continue talks on the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula.

With regard to conventional weapons, their proliferation in theatres of conflict must remind us all of the need for the full implementation of instruments regulating the arms trade. My country welcomes the adoption, without a vote, of the new Global Framework for Through-life Conventional Ammunition Management, which will undoubtedly make it possible to remedy the existing shortcomings regarding the safe, secure and sustainable management of such ammunition.

The urgency of finding a successful outcome to those crucial questions for the preservation of peace and security requires us to put an end to our traditional differences and to be more pragmatic in our deliberations. Although the global disarmament and non-proliferation regime has encountered many obstacles in recent years, we must not be discouraged. Progress is possible — to achieve it, we just need to demonstrate stronger political will. The credibility of our action within the First Committee is at stake, as is the advent of a peaceful, secure and prosperous world.

Mrs. Pierre (Haiti) (*spoke in French*): My delegation wishes to express its full support for the statements delivered by the representative of Jamaica on behalf of the Caribbean Community and the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/78/PV.2).

We meet at a time when human security is increasingly precarious, owing to multiple tensions and the ever-present threat of the use of weapons of mass destruction. Those threats seriously challenge the preservation of international peace and security, which is the principal mission of the United Nations. It is clear that the challenges to international peace and security, as well as the gaps in mutual trust between States, are greater than ever. Such distrust constitutes a major obstacle to progress on disarmament, simultaneously fuelling the continued increase in military budgets, the modernization of arsenals and the militarization of outer space, all of which creates dangerous competition and contravenes the Sustainable Development Goals.

The delegation of Haiti wishes to reaffirm its unwavering commitment to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, and its constant defence of multilateral diplomacy based on the fundamental principle of negotiation in the areas of disarmament and non-proliferation.

In that regard, Haiti remains convinced that the ideology of multilateralism, dialogue and negotiation represents the most effective means by which to resolve conflicts and maintain international peace and security in the interest of preserving future generations. We encourage States involved in disputes to resolve them peacefully and support any legal initiative consistent with the principles established by the Charter of the United Nations with a view to preventing international tensions.

The Haitian delegation reiterates its support for international efforts to achieve a world free of nuclear weapons and nuclear testing, while stressing the importance of achieving universal adherence to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. The international community must cultivate a culture of peace to prevent the disastrous humanitarian consequences of those weapons. Haiti welcomes the success of the first Meeting of States Parties to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and reaffirms its support for the Treaty as an essential element complementing the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. We wish the second Meeting of States Parties every success.

Haiti would like to urgently draw the international community's attention to the rapid development of the indiscriminate use of autonomous weapons, with a view to effectively maintaining meaningful human control over them and protecting the civilian population from the serious ethical, legal and humanitarian problems posed by those weapons. To that end, my delegation welcomes the progress made in drafting a legally binding international instrument to effectively prohibit and regulate those weapons.

Concerning conventional weapons, the proliferation of small arms and light weapons and anti-personnel mines undeniably have destabilizing repercussions on social and economic development, while also representing a major challenge to security at the international, regional and national levels. In particular, the Haitian delegation would like underscore in particular the trade in arms, the illegal trafficking of which leads to egregious mass-scale killing, while arms exports continue to increase, thereby contravening the principles and goals established by the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT). As a victim of the illegal trade in small arms and light weapons, the Republic of Haiti continues to call on Member States to take the necessary measures to prevent the direct or indirect supply, sale or transfer of such weapons to Haiti and for compliance with the obligations of the ATT, as well as the International Tracing Instrument for the export and stockpiling of firearms. Those weapons should be used for security and peace, not to bring about devastation. My delegation calls on countries that manufacture and export those weapons and ammunition to shoulder their responsibility, while encouraging them to cooperate with non-producer countries. We call for the strengthening of bilateral, regional and international cooperation to

combat the illicit transnational trafficking of those weapons. Haiti strongly supports the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects as a key instrument in preventing, combating and eliminating the illicit trade in arms.

We have taken note of the recommendations made by the Secretary-General in his New Agenda for Peace. We would also like to commend the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean on its outstanding work in the area of disarmament and security in our region. Such a model of cooperation and commitment to peace and security should be welcomed and encouraged. We hope that the initiative will serve as an inspiration for other regions in the world and will further strengthen our resolve to overcome global disarmament and security challenges. Haiti remains firmly committed to the promotion of international peace and security and stands ready to collaborate actively with all States concerned to achieve those noble goals.

Ms. Chan Valverde (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): Over the past three years, Costa Rica has spared no effort to resolve the gender blindness that tarnishes almost every instrument related to international peace and security. Gender blindness is the failure to acknowledge the fact that different roles and responsibilities are attributed to, or imposed on, men, women, boys and girls in specific social, cultural, economic and political contexts. Addressing gender blindness in disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control continues to elicit resistance. Some have told us that gender comes under the purview of the Third Committee — the Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Committee; that gender has nothing to do with weapons given the fact that bullets are equally lethal for women and men; and that we should avoid raising such controversial issues, as they prevent us from reaching consensus on issues related to peace and security. However, all weapons, from nuclear weapons to drones, have a gender dimension that had not been acknowledged until only recently. For example, the proliferation and illicit circulation of small arms and light weapons and their ammunition continue to contribute to facilitating and perpetuating sexual violence in conflict and post-conflict situations, while exacerbating individuals' vulnerability.

Consequently, disarmament and arms control are a critical approach to preventing and addressing such heinous acts, as the establishment of various United

Nations frameworks of cooperation concerning the prevention and response to conflict-related sexual violence attests to. However, more needs to be done to link, in a practical manner, disarmament and arms control with the women and peace and security agenda. To that end, Costa Rica will continue to call on the Security Council to promote and include disarmament and arms control issues in its discussions and decisions related to women and peace and security agenda to advance its implementation even further, including by preventing the diversion of weapons and ammunition, which continue to fuel conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence in many contexts. On a practical level, Costa Rica calls for greater harmonization among national strategies to implement the women and peace and security agenda and regulations on small weapons and light weapons by integrating controls on small weapons and light weapons in national action plans on women and peace and security, and considerations on women and peace and security in national action plans on small arms and light weapons. That could provide a springboard for advancing such efforts at the global level.

As Vice-Chair of the Open-Ended Working Group on Conventional Ammunition, Costa Rica welcomes the adoption in June of a Global Framework for Through-life Conventional Ammunition Management, which comprises 15 objectives (A/78/111). Costa Rica is pleased to note that the joint declaration signed by 64 States ensured that the Global Framework acknowledged the role of conventional ammunition in facilitating armed violence, including gender-based violence, and that gender considerations were included also in specific objectives, such as objectives 8 and 13.

Furthermore, for Costa Rica, it is clear that we urgently need new governance frameworks for cybersecurity, cybercrime and artificial intelligence and, above all, to ensure that they are gender-sensitive. We are well aware that, all too often, artificial intelligence discriminates against people who are already marginalized in society: non-white people, women and those with disabilities. Even when it functions properly, artificial intelligence can select a target based solely on a general profile. It is impossible to code for all the complex variables that make up a battlefield or urban area.

Autonomous armed weapons systems follow their algorithms, but they cannot make decisions like human beings or act based on a sense of human

morality or dignity. Given the growing militarization of new technologies and in keeping with what was agreed in the Belén communiqué, we will, along with an interregional group of States, submit a draft resolution to the General Assembly on this topic at this session. We urge all States to heed the joint call of the Secretary-General and the International Committee of the Red Cross to vote in favour of that draft resolution, as it limits itself exclusively to requesting a report on States' views on the matter.

Yearly global military expenditure has more than doubled, exceeding \$2 trillion. Costa Rica would like to recall that the Secretary-General, in his 2021 report on women and peace and security (S/2021/827), called urgently for action to reduce military spending and to increase investment in equity, peacebuilding, education, health and other public programmes, in keeping with Article 26 of the Charter of the United Nations. Reversing the upward trajectory in military expenditure is a priority for the women's peace movement and a key commitment for the United Nations. Armed violence, conflict and war are preventable, and we can start by rectifying gender blindness in international instruments in the area of peace and security, ensuring that we have precise, representative, inclusive and disaggregated data, increasing the number of women heads of delegation in negotiations, and intentionally including gender experts in those delegations. We must recognize that women deserve not only a seat at the negotiating table, but also an influential role in conflict prevention, mediation and all leadership roles.

Mr. Kridelka (Belgium): First, I would like to congratulate the Chair on assuming the leadership of the First Committee for this session, and I would like to assure him of Belgium's full support.

We fully align ourselves with the statement made on behalf of the European Union (see A/C.1/78/PV.2).

Belgium condemns with the utmost vigour the terrorist attacks that have been perpetrated by Hamas against Israeli civilians since Saturday morning and the kidnapping of innocent hostages. Such practices benefit no one. They affect both Israelis and Palestinians, as they expose them to violence and further undermine the possibility of a negotiated political solution. Belgium calls for the respect of international humanitarian law in all circumstances, everywhere.

The world is faced with stark choices. The foundation of the rules-based international order, the Charter of our United Nations, has been upended by

one of the permanent members of the Security Council: Russia. Other treaties and agreements have been trampled on and dissolved. Democratic processes are in turmoil. The tenets of the current world order are being challenged. Harsh experience of the twentieth century, however, taught us the value of the principles upon which multilateralism is built. Norms, agreements and oversight create a buffer against a world disorder where might is right and where the self-interest of some prevails over the common interest of humankind. Today, the choice that every nation makes will have an impact on how our world of tomorrow will be.

In that context, neutrality with regard to the war in Ukraine is not an option. One cannot pay lip service to the principles of national sovereignty and territorial integrity, and at the same time look away from Russia's aggression, its illegal war and its blatant disregard of international humanitarian law and human rights. In the pursuit of its self-interest, Russia is also shaking the underpinnings of the non-proliferation and disarmament regime. It has violated treaties, and it unjustifiably attacks the credibility of international organizations. Here, too, one cannot remain indifferent when the impartiality and neutrality of organizations are wrongfully put into question. Belgium is extremely concerned about the reports that a State party to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty is considering revoking its ratification of the Treaty. Such a decision would deal a systemic blow to the international non-proliferation regime. The international norm against nuclear tests forms an essential instrument in the fight against proliferation and the development of new types of nuclear weapons. Belgium calls on Russia to not head down that road.

Proliferation crises take no leave of absence. North Korea's exponential expansion of its ballistic missile and nuclear programmes calls for a united international response. Strict respect for United Nations sanctions is critical in that regard, in particular by the permanent members of the Security Council who imposed those measures. We call on North Korea to finally change its course to comply with the resolutions of the Security Council and to take the necessary steps towards denuclearization. Unfortunately, Iran is not heeding the call of the international community to show more transparency and apply more restraint in its nuclear programme. Moreover, it is actively undermining the capacity of the International Atomic Energy Agency to effectively monitor the implementation of the Joint

Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) and its respect for its Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement. Here, too, continued sanctions are an important tool to instil changes of behaviour. One can also draw a lesson about the importance of the Additional Protocol, which, in the case of Iran, would be a guarantee for effective control of the nuclear programme beyond any JCPOA expiry date.

Chemical weapons are the only weapons of mass destruction employed in conflict during this, the twenty-first century. Their re-emergence on the battlefield 10 years ago was an intolerable regression for international humanitarian law. Ten years later, the victims of these horrendous attacks are still awaiting the punishment of those responsible, and Syria is still in non-compliance with its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention. Belgium calls on Syria to cooperate with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and to shed full light on its chemical weapons programme. We reconfirm our confidence in the impartiality and expertise of the Technical Secretariat of the OPCW.

We also express our support for the draft resolution on autonomous weapons systems introduced by Austria, of which Belgium is an original co-sponsor. At the same time, we will continue efforts within the framework of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons to foster consensus on a normative framework regarding autonomous weapons systems.

(spoke in French)

Over the past decade, the international community has clearly indicated that the rules-based international order should guide State behaviour in cyberspace. The wide support given to last year's resolution on a programme of action to advance responsible State behaviour in the use of information and communications technologies in the context of international security (resolution 77/37) reflects the clear desire of a great majority of States to promote peace and security in cyberspace through a permanent and inclusive mechanism. The programme of action is the most appropriate instrument to operationalize the agreed norms, support their implementation and the strengthening of national capacities, and boost engagement with the community of stakeholders.

We support the follow-up draft resolution on the cyberspace programme of action presented by France this year, and we would call on all States to support the

implementation of the programme of action by 2026. We would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his report on the programme of action (A/78/76), and we support his recommendations.

Belgium very much looks forward to the meetings devoted to the programme of action in the context of the Open-Ended Working Group on the Security of and in the Use of Information and Communications Technologies 2021–2025.

Mr. Mohamedou (Mauritania) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate the Chair on his assumption of the chairship of our Committee at its seventy-eighth session. I also congratulate the members of the Bureau and assure you of Mauritania's full support. We look forward to a successful and effective session as we address questions related to disarmament and international security.

My country's delegation associates itself with the statements made by the representatives of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (see A/C.1/78/PV.2), Nigeria on behalf of the Group of African States (see A/C.1/78/PV.3) and Jordan on behalf of the Group of Arab States (see A/C.1/78/PV.2). I would like to make the following remarks in my national capacity.

My country believes in the unlimited possibilities offered by multilateral action to ensure peace in the world and achieve development and well-being for humankind. There is no doubt that all delegations are aware of the magnitude of the challenges facing our world today, starting with the catastrophic effects of climate change, pandemics and deadly diseases — hence the need, in our view, to focus efforts on fighting those dangers instead of fighting each other.

However, the arms race has not stopped, as confirmed by the outrageous increase in military spending, even as the coronavirus disease pandemic continues. That spending has increased in view of the alarming polarization that our world is witnessing today. Nevertheless, we will continue to believe in prioritizing spending on development and on the fight against poverty and climate change, rather than on what appears to be a frantic race to annihilate humankind.

Mauritania expresses its disappointment at the continued failure to achieve tangible progress on nuclear disarmament and the universalization of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). It calls for launching a frank and comprehensive

dialogue in preparation for, and for the success of, the eleventh Review Conference of the Parties to the NPT, with a view to ensuring consensus on a comprehensive final document that reflects the reiterated commitment of States to the Treaty's objectives and to avoiding a repeat of the tenth Review Conference's failure to reach consensus on a foundational reference document on the doctrine of nuclear non-proliferation.

My country is proud of its ratification of the Treaty of Pelindaba, which established a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Africa, and of its continued commitment to efforts aimed at achieving the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. In that context, Mauritania values the progress achieved at the three previous sessions of the aforementioned conference. It congratulates the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, the State of Kuwait and the Lebanese Republic on their successful and productive presidencies of the three sessions. Mauritania also welcomes sisterly Libya's presidency of the fourth session of the conference, slated to be held this year, and it is committed to working with States parties and the United Nations to ensure the success of the conference, in the context of efforts to establish a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, in line with the resolution adopted at the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the NPT. We call on all States to participate effectively in the work of the Conference, and we call on Middle Eastern States that are lagging in their nuclear commitments to join the conference, accede to the NPT and undertake to comply with the International Atomic Energy Agency's comprehensive safeguards regime.

In the context of its efforts to combat terrorism and organized crime and to address hotspots at the regional and global levels, Mauritania views with great interest the thematic files discussed in the First Committee.

With regard to outer space, my country believes in the importance and sensitivity of the issue and, consequently, deems it necessary to update international conventions governing the peaceful use of outer space and to protect the inalienable right of all States to use outer space for peaceful purposes. In that context, Mauritania welcomes the establishment of a Group of Governmental Experts on Further Practical Measures for the Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space to consider and make recommendations on substantial elements of a legally binding convention, in accordance

with General Assembly resolution 77/250. It looks forward to participating effectively in the work of the Group, which is anticipated to begin in November.

With regard to conventional weapons, and in view of the close link between the flourishing of terrorist groups and smuggling groups, organized crime and easy access to small arms and light weapons, my country relies heavily on the work of the United Nations system, in particular the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. It makes national efforts to combat those phenomena and to tackle the hotspots resulting from them in the Sahel region and the African continent in general. Despite the utmost importance, in terms of both security and human welfare, of combating the spread of small arms and light weapons owing to their role in triggering and spreading conflicts, the inherent right of States to the legal trade in conventional arms should not be restricted under any circumstances, as a sovereign decision reinforced by the right to legitimate self-defence, as established in Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations.

Mauritania expresses its satisfaction with the adoption of the outcome document of the eighth Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons. It relies heavily on the Meeting's recommendations and looks forward to the active participation of all Member States and relevant parties in the fourth United Nations Conference to Review Progress Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, to be held next year. Mauritania also calls for the proposed development of a United Nations fellowship programme to build the capacities of developing countries on small arms and light weapons, in line with the recommendations set out in the outcome document of the eighth Biennial Meeting of States.

Mauritania also welcomes the conclusion of the work of the Open-ended Working Group to elaborate a set of political commitments as a new global framework that will address existing gaps in through-life ammunition management in a voluntary, independent and comprehensive manner. It also calls for the urgent activation of the fellowship programme aimed at building the capacity of developing States on issues related to conventional ammunition.

With regard to cybersecurity, my country welcomes the adoption of the second annual progress report of the Open-ended Working Group on Security of and in the Use of Information and Communications Technologies (see A/78/265). It looks forward to continuing consultations with all parties in order to support developing countries in facing the growing and multiple challenges posed by reliance on information and communications technology. It stresses that it is important for all to participate in the Working Group and that international cooperation under the United Nations umbrella continue in order to enhance the countries' capacity to counter the unlimited disruptive risks that can result from the criminal use of those means.

As a party to the NPT, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction, the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction and the 1925 Geneva Protocol, my country, Mauritania, reaffirms before the international community its commitment to abiding by and complying with all international efforts aimed at comprehensive and complete disarmament and, in particular, at a nuclear-weapon-free world.

In conclusion, Mauritania would like to reiterate its full support for the work of the First Committee and our determination to work together with all Member States.

Mrs. Petit (France) (*spoke in French*): As it is the first time I take the floor in the Committee, I would like to congratulate the Chair on his election.

I would like to reiterate France's condemnation in the strongest terms of the terrorist attacks perpetrated by Hamas and express our grave concern about the situation of hostages and the wounded. I would also like to extend my condolences to all the victims.

France aligns itself with the statement made by the representative of the European Union (see A/C.1/78/PV.2) and would like to add the following remarks in its national capacity.

This year, yet again, our work continues to be marked by the illegal and unjustified armed aggression by Russia against Ukraine. Russia's violation of the Charter of the United Nations and of its own international commitments, including security

assurances provided within the Budapest Memorandum, undermines international peace and security. We also deplore Russia's suspension of its participation in the New START Treaty, its use of irresponsible nuclear rhetoric and its attacks on energy infrastructure, including nuclear facilities. Those actions undermine the international security architecture and directly affect the work of our forum.

In that context, working for peace and ensuring international stability requires, on the one hand, preserving existing multilateral instruments, and on the other hand, promoting the regulation of behaviours in new areas of competition and conflict.

First of all, with regard to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), that instrument remains the cornerstone of our nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime. We welcome the depth of discussions during the Preparatory Committee for the 2026 Review Conference of the Parties to the NPT, held in August, as well as the working group that preceded it, on further strengthening the review process. However, we regret that the blocking strategies of some States Parties prevented the referencing of the synthesis of our discussions. We thank Chair Viinainen for his commitment to ensuring the continuity of work between the two chairmanships and offer our full support to Kazakhstan, which will chair the Second Committee.

France also remains fully committed to finding a diplomatic solution to nuclear proliferation crises. We call on Iran to reverse the escalation of its nuclear programme, under way for more than four years. Iran must also cooperate fully, promptly and in good faith with the International Atomic Energy Agency, in accordance with its international obligations. Additionally, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea must carry out the complete, verifiable and irreversible dismantlement of all its proliferation programmes, in line with Security Council resolutions and its international commitments.

With regard to chemical weapons, we also remain fully committed to upholding the prohibition of their development, storage and use, especially as some States, like Syria, have contributed to their development with impunity, used them or obstructed the work of the teams of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. The use of chemical weapons by Russia in Ukraine, either in a direct attack or under false

pretences, would be irresponsible and have disastrous humanitarian and environmental consequences. We will continue to take firm action in support of the Chemical Weapons Convention and its investigative mechanisms. France will continue to fight against impunity, especially within the International Partnership Against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons.

In that context, France is committed to advancing the discussion on regulation in emerging areas of conflict. We are fully engaged in the Open-ended Working Group (OEWG) on Security of and in the Use of Information and Communications Technologies 2021–2025. Inclusive discussions in that format have led to significant progress and must continue. However, the United Nations must also be able to assist Member States in enhancing their national capacities to prevent and respond to cyberattacks. We cannot remain passive in the face of the deepening digital divide among States.

Therefore, we propose once again this year a resolution supporting the establishment of a permanent cybersecurity mechanism after the conclusion of the current OEWG in 2025, and no later than 2026. That resolution must build upon the discussions taking place within the OEWG to determine the contours of that future platform. We will thus continue the gradual process initiated in 2020, with the support of a broad cross-regional group of States, followed by resolution 78/16, adopted last year, on a programme of action, with 74 co-sponsors and 161 affirmative votes. We thank all States that have already supported that initiative.

France is also committed to better regulating lethal autonomous weapons systems. The Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) provides an appropriate framework for achieving tangible progress in that regard. France, along with other States, advocates a dual approach within the CCW, one that the First Committee knows well. The meeting of High Contracting Parties to the CCW, scheduled for November, should provide the Group of Governmental Experts with an enhanced negotiating mandate.

In the field of space, we applaud the work of the Open-ended Working Group on Reducing Space Threats through Norms, Rules and Principles of Responsible Behaviours. This Group, which has breathed new life into multilateral discussions on space safety, has garnered the interest of an increasing number of delegations and deserves to be continued, as many States have called for in the closing of the Group.

We will continue to be fully engaged in the coming months to advance the work of our disarmament forums. France is honoured to have served as one of the six Presidents of the Conference on Disarmament this year. In this capacity, France has worked to revitalize its work. Nevertheless, certain efforts were blocked, which led to observer members being prevented from participating in the Conference.

With regard to nuclear disarmament, we continue to pursue a positive disarmament agenda, which is the only way to produce tangible results: the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, the initiation of negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty, ongoing work on nuclear disarmament verification and deepening collective reflections on reducing strategic risks. In the coming months, France will continue to be fully engaged in the follow-up to the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention.

Regarding conventional weapons, France will also persist in its efforts to fully implement the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, as well as its work on the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention and the Convention on Cluster Munitions.

France has joined the Political Declaration on Strengthening the Protection of Civilians from the Humanitarian Consequences Arising from the Use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas, and we invite other States to do the same.

The First Committee can count on France to continue advocating effective multilateralism based on open dialogue and preventing politicization or instrumentalization, in the interest of disarmament and international security.

Ms. Boma (Zambia): Let me join other speakers before me in congratulating the Chair and the other members of the Bureau on their election to preside over the deliberations of the First Committee. I wish to express our unreserved support during their chairmanship. I also wish to commend the Secretariat on the excellent work in organizing the session.

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

In our twenty-first century globalized world, security is a collective concern that transcends States and territorial borders and affects the entire world. Contextually, international security or global security include military and diplomatic measures that nations and international organizations, such as the United Nations, take to ensure mutual safety and security. Those measures include the elimination of nuclear weapons, safeguarding outer space, enhancing cybersecurity and domesticating the Arms Trade Treaty to curb the illicit trade and proliferation of small arms and light weapons.

Nuclear weapons are the most terrifying weapons ever invented. We therefore cannot, as States, bury our heads in the sand and witness the modernization of nuclear weapons while stagnation remains in the negotiations on the total elimination of nuclear weapons. Discussions of that nature are important, and concrete ideas for effective measures are needed to arrest what would be the catastrophic consequences of any possible use of nuclear weapons. The threat is not limited to nations, as there is always the possibility of weapons-grade nuclear materials falling into the hands of terrorists or non-State actors.

With the rapid advancement of technology, cyberattacks have emerged as a significant threat to global security. The increasing sophistication of cybercriminals and State-sponsored hacking groups has made it crucial to enhance cybersecurity measures globally.

I hasten to acknowledge that outer space is one of the global commons that should be preserved for the benefit of all humankind. In recent years, security challenges have steadily increased in outer space and continue to escalate at an alarming rate. That security risk affects not only the sustainability of the space environment, but also the safe and secure operations of space activities and access to services. The risk may lead to the weaponization of outer space or the introduction of weapons into the outer space environment, where outer space itself becomes the battlefield or the fourth frontier of war.

One compelling reason for preventing an arms race in outer space is to preserve global security. The weaponization of outer space poses a significant threat to international peace and stability. Space-based weapons that can target satellites and communications systems or even intercept ballistic missiles could destabilize the strategic balance among nations. Collaborative efforts

are indispensable to establish international norms and agreements that explicitly ban the placement of weapons in outer space.

The illicit trade in and continued proliferation of small arms and light weapons has become a fundamental obstacle to global peace and security. The proliferation of small arms continues to be a major source of destruction of lives and property, exacerbating intercommunal tensions, leading to full-fledged conflicts and fuelling violence, crime and terrorism. It further presents serious global peace and security challenges. Those weapons in the wrong hands contribute to armed conflicts, human rights abuses and increased organized crime and terrorism. Additionally, the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons has implications for the achievement of several goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The Republic of Zambia has always been a strong and committed advocate for the complete disarmament of nuclear weapons. We reaffirm our commitment to the goal of the total elimination of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons and the prohibition of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. We acknowledge that this meeting is taking place at a time when global security is riddled with various challenges. There is therefore a need for concerted efforts to be taken to achieve global security through multilateralism and international security cooperation.

Zambia continues to support the work of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and recognizes it as the sole competent authority for the verification of the fulfilment of the safeguards obligations assumed by the States parties under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. In that regard, Zambia continues to underscore the importance of strict observance of the IAEA statutes and the relevant comprehensive safeguards agreements in conducting verification activities.

Zambia is alive to the current global security situation, which presents complex challenges. Addressing those challenges requires collective global efforts, including enhanced international cooperation, increased investment in cybersecurity and stricter regulations on nuclear weapons. Failure to address those threats would have severe consequences, whereas effectively addressing them would contribute to ensuring a stable and prosperous future for all humankind.

In conclusion, allow me to reiterate the importance for members of the international community who have not ratified or signed the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons to do so in order to promote and strengthen global security.

Mr. William (Vanuatu): Since this is the first time my delegation is taking the floor in the First Committee for this session, let me begin by congratulating the Chair of the Committee, yourself, Madam Vice-Chair, and the other members of the Bureau, on your elections to steer the Committee's work. I wish to assure you of my delegation's full support for your work.

We meet today at a time when the international security landscape has changed dramatically, and that has posed a threat to the current international order. We are deeply concerned about the conflict that is currently unfolding in the Middle East and hope for a peaceful solution to be reached soon. We express our solidarity with the victims of that conflict and their families.

The Ukraine-Russia conflict is ongoing, in its second year, and the call for a lasting and peaceful solution remains unheeded. The conflict has resulted in humanitarian suffering in Ukraine, in addition to creating global inflation and food and energy insecurity. The conflict reflects weaknesses in the international system, as the Security Council remains paralysed in finding a permanent solution. Given the complexity of the Ukraine conflict, Vanuatu calls for a lasting, peaceful solution that is in line with current international norms and laws.

With the deteriorating international security situation, it is no surprise that military spending has increased over the past years. In 2022, military expenditures rose to \$2 trillion. From the period from 2013 to 2022, global military spending expanded by 19 per cent. That trend will continue to increase, given the Ukraine-Russia conflict, conflicts in some regions of the world and the intense geopolitical competition we are witnessing today.

This context of geopolitical competition and the Ukraine conflict has created a void in which it is difficult for superpowers to enter into any bilateral or multilateral arms-control agreement. The ending of the New START Treaty and the failure to establish a new one is a classic example. That trend is worrisome, given that there is no legally binding treaty between world's two largest nuclear Powers. That poses uncertainty for our international security climate.

Given the heightened securitized climate, Vanuatu supports the Secretary-General's New Agenda for Peace. In the Agenda, the Secretary-General highlights Article 26 of the Charter of the United Nations and calls on all Member States to reverse the current increase in military spending. He calls on all States to refrain from securitizing peace and to adopt a more human-centred disarmament.

As we continue to see an increase in conflicts resulting in substantial humanitarian suffering, it is important for arms to be controlled. The Arms Trade Treaty is critical, and it is important for it to be universalized and implemented.

Vanuatu is a party to the Rarotonga Treaty, in line with its desire to see the South Pacific free from nuclear weapons. In that connection, Vanuatu is committed to seeing a world free from nuclear weapons. That is why Vanuatu joined the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). We urge all Member States to join the TPNW. Joining the Treaty would send a clear signal to the world that we want to live in a world free of nuclear weapons.

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons remains the cornerstone of our disarmament architecture. It is crucial that nuclear States fulfil their obligations under the Treaty to ensure confidence within the international community.

The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) remains a pillar for a nuclear-free future. It has created a global norm whereby we have collectively opposed future nuclear tests. However, we have seen the nuclear tests are continuing on the Korean peninsula, and we call for a peaceful peninsula. As it stands, the CTBT has not entered into force, as some States did not ratify it. It is critical for the Treaty to be ratified.

The international community has unanimously agreed that international law is applicable to all States operating in cyberspace. However, some actors are exploiting that space to misuse data and undermine global peace and stability. This year, Vanuatu experienced a cyberattack that shut down all its State systems, and without international support, it will be difficult to restore our systems. We call for a safe cyberspace and look forward to the work of the Open-Ended Working Group on Security of and in the Use of Information and Communications Technologies 2021–2025 to provide the necessary international norms critical for a safe cyberspace environment.

With the rapid technological revolution, we have witnessed the development of artificial intelligence-powered autonomous weapons, which has challenged current norms relating to international human rights and humanitarian standards. The use of such weapons could blur the roles of human choice and accountability. Vanuatu calls for the establishment of an international framework to ensure that international humanitarian law and human rights law are respected, and, in that connection, we welcome the draft resolution on autonomous weapons to be submitted to the Committee.

With the current fragmentation of the world, the current global norms remain challenged, which continues to pose uncertainty in the international security climate. Without international peace and security, the current international order will be threatened, and achieving sustainable development will therefore be difficult. The current international order has been our main source of stability and prosperity for the past decades. We need to collectively preserve it.

Ms. Jiménez de la Hoz (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, allow me to congratulate the Chair of the First Committee and the Bureau on the assumption of their duties and assure them of my delegation's full cooperation.

I would like to begin my statement by declaring Spain's strong condemnation of the terrorist attacks by Hamas against Israel and our solidarity with the victims. The priorities are the de-escalation of violence, the release of those kidnapped and full respect for international humanitarian law. Spain reiterates its unwavering commitment to peace and stability in the region.

Spain aligns itself with the statement delivered by the European Union (see A/C.1/78/PV.2), and I will make a series of additional remarks in my national capacity.

In a context such as the one in which we currently find ourselves, in which threats to international peace and security are not only not abating, but intensifying, the work of the First Committee is more relevant than ever. We therefore reiterate our firm condemnation of the aggression by the Russian Federation against Ukraine, which has already cost too many lives and must stop. We insist that Russia comply with international law and withdraw all its troops from Ukraine.

On the issue of nuclear weapons, the irresponsible nuclear rhetoric of the Russian authorities, as well as measures such as the placement of nuclear weapons in Belarus and the suspension of the implementation of the Treaty on Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms, constitute an unprecedented challenge to the international nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation architecture, thereby endangering international peace and security. Russia must return without delay to fulfilling its obligations under the New START Treaty.

Given the context of crisis, Spain wishes to express its concern about certain delegations' inflexibility and irresponsibility at the start of the new review cycle of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). In contrast, the commitment of practically all delegations to the NPT, together with the confirmation that, despite our differences, there is a high degree of convergence on the steps to be taken to improve the review cycle, mean that we might maintain a certain sense of optimism about and confidence in the success of the upcoming Review Conference of the Parties to the NPT. With that expectation, Spain is committed to continuing to build bridges between groups of States with varying concerns, such as those that make up the Stockholm Initiative on Nuclear Disarmament.

Spain reiterates its firm commitment to the moratorium on nuclear tests and the prompt entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and wishes to thank the Executive Secretary for his efforts towards the Treaty's full universalization. We welcome the most recent ratifications of the Treaty and reiterate our call on the annex 2 States to sign and ratify it. Spain appeals to all States that have ratified the Treaty to maintain their commitments and refrain from carrying out any action contrary to the objectives and purpose of the Treaty.

We advocate resuming negotiations as soon as possible to adopt a fissile material cut-off treaty and a moratorium on the production of such material until such a treaty enters into force.

Likewise, Spain supports the holding of a new session of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction, with the aim of including all parties in its development.

The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, endorsed by the Security Council in its resolution 2231 (2015), made a fundamental contribution to the international

nuclear non-proliferation regime and regional stability. Despite the difficulties involved, Spain continues to firmly defend the need to find a diplomatic solution to the Iranian nuclear issue, which is why we fully support the determined efforts of the High Representative of the European Union and the essential work of the International Atomic Energy Agency in that regard.

We follow with great concern the events in North Korea, and we urge its authorities to respect the relevant Security Council resolutions, to refrain from new missile and nuclear missile tests and to commit to a dialogue that leads to complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization.

Although we would have liked the ninth Review Conference of the States Parties to the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention to achieve more ambitious results, we welcome the establishment of a working group that is guiding work during the intersessional period. We consider it a priority to work on verification measures, which should allow us to move towards the approval of a verification protocol.

Despite the lack of consensus, we find ourselves at a key juncture. Following the completion of the United States chemical disarmament process in July, with the destruction of its last arsenals — which we commend — it is essential to redouble efforts to ensure that chemical weapons are not used under any circumstances. We applaud the objective and professional work of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons in its response to the use of that type of weaponry in the Syrian conflict and urge the Syrian authorities to fully comply with their obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention. Likewise, we appeal for clarification, through exhaustive and transparent investigations, on the concerning cases of the use of chemical weapons in other situations.

Export control regimes are an effective tool to promote the responsible transfer of military or dual-use equipment and technologies and constitute an essential element of the non-proliferation architecture. They also facilitate legitimate trade and international cooperation for the peaceful uses of nuclear and biochemical technologies, among other things.

Spain remains committed to the Arms Trade Treaty, as we demonstrated during our chairpersonship of the Working Group on Effective Treaty Implementation. Despite the undeniable progress that has been achieved, the great challenge remains its universalization.

With regard to anti-personnel mines and cluster munitions, Spain remains committed to supporting demining efforts, actively participating in the relevant treaty bodies and putting our institutional capacity at the disposal of the international community. We have worked actively over the last year to advance the universalization of the Convention on Cluster Munitions.

New technologies open up possibilities but also give rise to new challenges for the non-proliferation and disarmament regime. The rapid development of artificial intelligence brings benefits but also implies potential risks to the safety and health of individuals. Pending the evolution of autonomous lethal weapons systems, Spain joins in supporting proposals aimed at prohibiting those that operate systems without human control and at regulating the rest.

Despite the completion of the work of the Open-ended Working Group on Reducing Space Threats, there is a need to move towards a framework to ensure that outer space is maintained as a peaceful, secure, stable and sustainable environment for all.

Finally, I will mention several cross-cutting issues that are a priority for my delegation.

First, Spain, as one of the few countries with a feminist foreign policy, has incorporated gender equality as a distinctive element of its foreign policy, as well as in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation, thereby enabling us to achieve gender equality. That will be a primary objective for my delegation —

The Acting Chair: I apologize, but you have exceeded the allocated time for your statement.

Mr. Tito (Kiribati): I am honoured to deliver some remarks on behalf of my delegation.

For the past 78 years, the First Committee has carried out an ambitious dream of the founding fathers of our United Nations — a dream of a new world free from wars and atrocities and the human pain and suffering associated with war.

We suffered our fair share of atrocities and pain, when our peaceful islands, oceans and seas were turned into a theatre of fierce fighting between Japanese and American forces. Approximately 1,000 innocent Kiribati lives were lost, and many more were dehumanized by forced labour. Our capital island of Tarawa became a rubble of sand, soiled by the blood and sweat of thousands of soldiers. Thereafter, the people of

Kiribati became determined not to allow their country once again to harbour or support the development of military forces, or the use of force. Being one of the few places in the world where nuclear weapons were tested and developed, during the height of the Cold War, since then, in 2019, Kiribati decided to become a State party to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in order to devote itself fully to humankind's fight against the scourge and evil of nuclear weapons. It will continue to strive on the path forward to join forces with other like-minded countries, organizations and peoples until such time as that noble mission is fully accomplished.

Kiribati's determination to take on that heavy and difficult task is prompted by the pain and suffering of countless people around the world, including its own citizens, who became helpless victims of the use and testing of nuclear weapons. Despite the multiple challenges confronting us, we are determined to play our part in the global anti-nuclear movement, which was launched by the General Assembly on 5 December 2013 (resolution 68/32), when the General Assembly declared 26 September to be the day to remind ourselves of the threats and dangers of nuclear weapons and the urgent need to eliminate them before they eliminate us all and all forms of life on Earth. As is well known, numerous people in Kiribati suffered from the impacts of the nuclear-weapon testing that was conducted in and around our Christmas Island between 1957 and 1962 by two large nuclear Powers. That testing resulted in serious humanitarian and environmental problems that continue to plague the health and the livelihoods of our people to this very day and will likely do so in the future.

On 28 April 1958, Operation Grapple, the largest thermonuclear test in the world at the time, was launched. The 500 citizens of Kiribati living on Christmas Island at the time of the test received little protection and inadequate warning. Not being aware of the dangers of such tests, most of them lifted the tarpaulin cover provided for them to catch a glimpse of the spectacular display of the intensely hot cloud of fire above them. Many would later complain about all sorts of untreatable illnesses and health complications, most of which resulted in death. There were numerous cases of cancer and congenital disabilities and abnormalities with newborn babies. Cases of that kind persist with the descendants of those on the island when the tests were carried out. As a country badly affected by nuclear testing, Kiribati recognizes its

leading role in coordinating jointly with Kazakhstan the implementation of articles VI and VII of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, with a focus on providing assistance to persons, communities and environments harmed by the past use and testing of nuclear weapons.

The Chair took the chair.

As part of our commitment to accelerate the realization of the noble dream of a world free of nuclear weapons, our Government is offering Christmas Island to be the global or regional centre of the United Nations' denuclearization agenda. As it is fully convinced from its first-hand experience that nuclear weapons are dangerous to human life, Kiribati calls on all peace-loving leaders and peoples of the world to renew their commitment to faster and greater cooperation and collaboration for the achievement of a nuclear-weapon-free world, one free of wars and rich in human fraternity, respect, trust, peace, harmony and happiness, as envisioned by the founding fathers of the United Nations. Let us all agree not to allow our common resolve to eradicate nuclear weapons from the face of the Earth to be hijacked by those who build their wealth and prosperity on the tools, instruments and spoils of war and profit enormously from the sale and production of armaments.

We urge our fellow States parties to join our request for nuclear justice and recognize that by providing adequate financial and other resources to address the special needs of nuclear victims and remediate contaminated environments, we can address the stain of nuclear weapons that has plagued the Pacific region and other regions of the world, where nuclear weapons were used and tested. Let us remind ourselves of the task of eliminating nuclear weapons by calling on all nuclear-weapon-States to safely disassemble and remove all their nuclear arsenals and redirect their nuclear profits and growth towards peace and health-building industries and activities and begin to put all their trust in the mechanism of the peaceful settlement of disputes, as enshrined in Chapter VI of the Charter of the United Nations, thus turning war and aggression into an outdated and obsolete means of settling disputes, no longer fit for our modern and enlightened civilization.

Mrs. Assoweh (Djibouti) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I congratulate you, Sir, on your election as Chair of the First Committee, and the members of the Bureau on their elections. My delegation will be at your side

to support you during your term of office. We believe that you will lead the work of the First Committee to the best of your ability, and we hope that our work will enable us to achieve its objectives.

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

On behalf of the delegation of Djibouti, we would like to make the following remarks.

My country is deeply concerned about the current situation in the Middle East and its recent developments. We call on the international community to find an urgently needed solution to the humanitarian crisis.

It is with a deep, shared sense of urgency and responsibility for the future of our planet and humankind that I am speaking before the General Assembly, to align ourselves with the countries that have expressed their resolve to seek lasting solutions to achieve peace and security in the world. The history of humankind has been marked by innovations and discoveries that have shaped our destiny. However, the advent of nuclear weapons in the world was a critical and painful turning point, as those weapons entail mass destruction and can annihilate life on a massive scale, sow pandemonium in our cities and contaminate the environment for present and future generations.

Every year, every nation expresses its desire for world of peace and security. Yet, day after day, we see that the world is under increasing threat from the use of nuclear weapons, biological and chemical weapons, autonomous weapons and cyberattacks, to name but a few. Despite the joint efforts of delegations to find consensus-based solutions to States' divergent views, the work of the tenth and eleventh Review Conferences of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) was unsuccessful. We hope that the next NPT Review Conference, scheduled for 2026, will allow for the implementation of the NPT, the cornerstone of the nuclear non-proliferation regime. We also regret the fact that the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) has yet to be implemented. It is incumbent upon us to appeal to the annex 2 States to reverse their position in order to allow for the full implementation of the CTBT.

Djibouti is strongly in favour of resolving conflicts through dialogue, diplomacy and negotiation, rather than through the threat or the use of nuclear weapons or other weapons. In that regard, we are committed to providing support to all regional and international mechanisms that support the three pillars of the NPT, which are disarmament, non-proliferation and the peaceful use of nuclear energy. We believe that the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) is an instrument that complements the NPT and the CTBT, and we support it. That is why we committed, at the Conference on Disarmament, during the seventy-seventh session of the General Assembly, to joining that Treaty. We are pleased to have signed the TPNW on 9 January 2023, and the process of its ratification is underway. We call on all States that have not yet done so to endorse the TPNW without delay.

Djibouti supports all Member States that are part of nuclear-weapon-free zones. Such initiatives contribute to global peace and security and build confidence among States of the region and throughout the world. That is why we believe that it is paramount to make the Middle East a nuclear-weapon-free zone. All countries in the Middle East region should adhere to that principle and adopt such a treaty in order to avoid conflicts that could lead to the utilization of weapons of mass destruction. We welcome the work of the three conferences on the issue, as they have made it possible for that process to advance. We hope for every success for the fourth Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction, to be held in November.

The illegal flow of small arms and light weapons and their ammunition represents a significant security issue, causing thousands of deaths every year, particularly in Africa and in conflict zones, and it is a challenge that we must face. We must combat the illicit trade in such weapons and bolster measures to control their circulation, while taking into account respect for the sovereignty of every State in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations.

Information and communications technologies play a central role in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Nevertheless, they present challenges in terms of personal, national, regional and international data security. Indeed, there is a need to adopt responsible and binding measures to counter attacks by cybercriminals. We therefore welcome the progress in the work of the fifth session of the Ad Hoc

Committee to Elaborate a Comprehensive International Convention on Countering the Use of Information and Communications Technologies for Criminal Purposes.

It is also important to stress the danger of lethal autonomous weapons systems. We recommend finding an international solution to counter their use. To do so, there is a need for coordinated action among civil society, the private sector and Governments, with the cooperation of the international community, in order to save humankind from that threat, which risks spiralling out of control.

We cannot harbour the hope of a world capable of coming together to overcome the current challenges to the SDGs — poverty, inequality and multifaceted geostrategic and geopolitical wars — unless we find common, lasting solutions to disarmament, the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the protection of outer space. Let us imagine a world with no nuclear weapons in which the money that, today, goes towards maintaining such weapons, which pose a major threat to humankind, could be injected into SDG programmes, such as on education, health and the fight against poverty. We appeal to the moral and ethical responsibility incumbent upon us as guardians of our Earth. Our duty to the coming generations should prevail over all other considerations.

In conclusion, although the world is at a crucial juncture, let us not yet lose hope and faith in a dynamic and effective multilateralism that can continue to fuel our discussions with a view to re-establishing trust, peace and security in the world.

Mr. Lebbaz (Algeria) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Mr. Chair, on your election as Chair of the First Committee during the current session. I also congratulate the members of the Bureau, and I assure you of Algeria's full support and cooperation to ensure the success of the Committee's work.

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

The following statement is made in our national capacity.

Algeria reiterates our firm commitment to the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations, which guide our work and confirm

the importance of diplomatic efforts, dialogue and cooperation. We also support the multilateral efforts and the international treaties that aim to achieve nuclear disarmament, which is not only a common-sense choice but a need that goes beyond choices and embodies legal and moral values for the survival of humanity.

In 1978, the States of the world agreed to address nuclear disarmament as an urgent task and a main priority on the agenda of international negotiations. The International Court of Justice has confirmed without a doubt that the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons is not consistent with the rules of international law.

We echo the international concerns and share the regret of the overwhelming majority of the international community concerning the slow pace of nuclear disarmament. Commitments by nuclear-weapon States must be translated into concrete actions. Our fears are heightened by the international nuclear disarmament situation, as the tenth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) failed to be a decisive turning point in moving forward towards achieving collective progress in the field of nuclear disarmament. We hope that the preparatory work for the next conference will enable us to overcome the disappointment at the failure by the past two Review Conferences to reach a final document.

Proceeding from its deeply held belief that the total elimination of nuclear weapons is the only guarantee that would protect the world from the dangers of such weapons, Algeria joins the overwhelming majority of States in calling upon the nuclear-weapon States, which bear the main responsibility in achieving nuclear disarmament, to honour their obligations under the NPT, including those agreed upon in the Review Conferences of 1995, 2000 and 2010, to fully and effectively implement their legal obligations under article 6 of the Treaty and to translate their commitments concerning nuclear disarmament into tangible results that meet the aspirations of the international community.

Algeria welcomes the entry into force of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, and we consider it a positive contribution to achieving nuclear disarmament and an important step towards delegitimizing nuclear weapons, leading to their total elimination. We also welcome the adoption of the Vienna declaration and programme of action as ambitious steps towards implementing the Treaty, and we look forward to the next annual meeting of the States parties to the Treaty.

Algeria is convinced of the importance of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty as a main element in the nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament system. We reiterate our call on the annex 2 States to sign and ratify the Treaty without delay in order to implement its legal obligations.

We would like to point out that the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones is not just a confidence-building measure, but a tangible step towards the complete elimination of nuclear weapons. While we salute the commitment of the African continent evidenced in the establishment of its nuclear-weapon-free zone, we call upon the States that have not done so to sign and ratify the three protocols of the Treaty of Pelindaba. In that context, Algeria reaffirms the vital importance of establishing a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East, which continues to be a legitimate demand and an absolute priority for achieving sustainable peace at the regional and international levels.

We welcomed the convening of the third session of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction, as well as its positive outcomes. We call on all the invited parties to participate constructively in the fourth session, to be held under Libya's presidency in November, in order to negotiate a legally binding treaty to implement the 1995 resolution on the Middle East contained in the annex to document NPT/CONF.1995/32 (Part I).

Algeria supports the work of the Open-ended Working Group on the Security of and in the Use of Information and Communications Technologies 2021–2025, established under General Assembly resolution 75/240. We also appreciate the adoption of its second annual report (see A/78/265) which notes the importance of collective action to strengthen international cooperation on countering threats posed by the malicious uses of information and communications technology in the context of international security. Algeria also believes that lethal autonomous weapon systems and their use raise a number of concerns, especially of a moral and legal nature, in addition to issues related to international peace and security. Those concerns should be thoroughly discussed and examined in the context of compliance with the norms of international law. Algeria supports the agreement reached within the context of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons that there is an urgent need to negotiate a legally binding instrument on such weapons.

The illicit trade in small arms and light weapons continues to pose a threat to peace, security and stability in many regions around the world. In that context, Algeria once again welcomes the adoption of the outcome document of the eighth Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects (A/CONF.192/BMS/2022/1) and its decision to establish a fellowship programme for small arms and light weapons. Algeria looks forward to the Programme of Action's fourth Review Conference, to be held in 2024. Algeria also values the efforts made within the framework of the Open-ended Working Group to Elaborate a Set of Political Commitments as a New Global Framework that Will Address Existing Gaps in Through-life Ammunition Management, established pursuant to General Assembly resolution 76/233, entitled "Problems arising from the accumulation of conventional ammunition stockpiles in surplus". Now that the Group has concluded its work, Algeria stresses the voluntary, non-binding nature of the document adopted in that context, along with the need to launch a fellowship programme to strengthen the capacities of developing countries in that area.

Algeria reiterates the importance of convening a fourth special session on disarmament. In that regard, we welcomed the report of the Open-ended Working Group on the Fourth Special Session of the General Assembly Devoted to Disarmament (A/AC.268/2017/2) and emphasize the importance of continuing consultations on it.

In view of the great significance of the Mediterranean region in Algerian foreign policy, and based on the principles of cooperation, good-neighbourliness and mutual respect, as in previous years my country will have the honour to submit the annual draft resolution entitled "Strengthening of security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region", and we call on all Member States to support the draft resolution by sponsoring and voting in favour of it.

Mr. Mahmud (Nigeria): Permit me to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as Chair of the First Committee at its seventy-eighth session, and to extend our congratulations to other members of the Bureau.

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

It is unfortunate that since the General Assembly's previous session little has changed regarding the challenges confronting the world, especially where global peace and security issues are concerned. My delegation reiterates its concern about the lack of progress on achieving nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation in all their aspects. We would like to reaffirm our position on nuclear disarmament, which continues to be a top priority for the United Nations, in line with the final document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (resolution S-10/2). Nigeria is deeply concerned about nuclear-weapon States' resistance to making progress on dismantling their nuclear weapons and what that resistance portends for the non-proliferation regime and the international security architecture. There is no question that nuclear weapons constitute an existential threat to humankind and that the consequences of those dangerous weapons would be catastrophic. It is against that backdrop that my delegation calls on all States, particularly the nuclear-weapon States, to consider the potential disastrous humanitarian consequences of the use of those weapons for human health, the environment and vital economic resources, among other areas. They should take the necessary measures and steps aimed at the total elimination of nuclear weapons. We need to see action being taken to dismantle them.

Nuclear weapons remain the ultimate agents of mass destruction, and their total elimination should be the final objective of all disarmament processes within the broad spectrum of the goals of the United Nations. It is in that context that Nigeria strongly supports all efforts aimed at complete nuclear disarmament, as the ultimate prerequisite for maintaining international peace and security. In that context, my delegation would like to point to the historic entry into force of the landmark Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), which among other things prohibits the development, testing, production, manufacture, acquisition, possession and stockpiling of nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. We remain proud of our active role in the process that led to the Treaty's adoption and of our status as one of the first States to sign and ratify it. We urge all members of the international community — especially the nuclear-weapon States and those under the so-called nuclear umbrella — to sign and ratify the Treaty as soon as possible and to pursue the goal of a nuclear-weapon-free world. My delegation reaffirms its support for the adoption of the Declaration of the first Meeting of

States Parties to the TPNW and renews its commitment to the Vienna Action Plan adopted to facilitate the Treaty's effective and timely implementation. We also look forward to the convening of the second Meeting of States Parties from 27 November to 1 December.

My delegation underscores the importance of continuing to respect the inalienable right to the peaceful use of nuclear energy and stresses the central role of the International Atomic Energy Agency in monitoring and inspecting nuclear facilities. We urge Member States to fulfil their commitment to the implementation of their safeguards agreements, as well the provision and promotion of technical assistance and cooperation by maximizing the use of science and technology for socioeconomic development.

We all have a duty to protect the environment by respecting the moratorium on nuclear testing as we work diligently to achieve universal adherence to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). On that note, my delegation calls on all States that have yet to ratify the CTBT, particularly the remaining eight States listed in the Treaty's annex 2, to do so without further delay.

My delegation underscores the importance of the United Nations Disarmament Commission. We further underscore the significance not only of preserving the Commission but of realizing its deliberative objectives.

Nigeria remains committed to the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, in all its ramifications. We have further demonstrated our commitment in that area by our signing and ratification of such relevant international, regional and subregional instruments as the Arms Trade Treaty and the Programme of Action, in addition to establishing and sustaining robust partnerships with the African Union, the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa and other relevant organizations working for peace in Africa and beyond. In addition, the Federal Government of Nigeria has set up a national centre for the control of small arms and light weapons that continues to be involved in activities geared to combating the proliferation of small arms and light weapons.

Mr. Abebe (Ethiopia): Let me begin by congratulating you, Mr. Chair, and the other members of the Bureau, on your election to steer the work of the First Committee of the General Assembly at its seventy-

eighth session. We are confident that under your able leadership our work will be effective and efficient. I want to assure you of my delegation's support and cooperation throughout the work of the Committee.

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

It is patently clear that our world is facing profound and complex challenges and the peace and security fears that threaten our collective existence as a community of nations. The threat of use of nuclear weapons, arms race modernization and the stockpile of other weapons of mass destruction, as well as conventional arms, seriously undermine our sense of collective security. That is why curbing the escalation of the nuclear arms race and reducing the stockpile of other weapons of mass destruction through the full implementation of the existing conventions and treaties are of paramount importance.

It is deeply worrisome that the risk of nuclear weapons continues to undermine the very premise of saving the next generations from the scourge of war. That is why the Secretary-General rightly warned that "geopolitical mistrust and competition have spiked the nuclear risk to Cold War levels". If the international community, particularly the major global Powers, do not choose dialogue and negotiation over rivalry, what would come is not World War Three, but the possible extermination of humankind and civilization as we know them. In addition, the continuous weaponization of new technologies, including artificial intelligence, is deeply alarming.

In the face of these multiple and interlinked challenges, the weakened spirit of global partnership is a source of grave concern. Collective action and consensus are being increasingly undermined in multilateral institutions. The Security Council remains divided and ineffective in the face of the war in Ukraine and other conflicts in Africa and elsewhere. Obviously we cannot address all those existential challenges as individual countries. It is perplexing why the international community remains unable or, in some cases, unwilling to come together to confront them with the highest sense of urgency and partnership.

To find solutions for global threats, Ethiopia calls for a paradigm shift. Business as usual has brought us to this dangerous age. The current state of multilateralism is the result of perpetuating the status quo at the expense of the promises of the future.

The world can still make the right choice, transcending differences to push for robust and meaningful collective action against the existential threats confronting humankind. It is high time to rebuild universal trust, resume constructive dialogue, reignite solidarity, revitalize partnership and seek new ways of acting collectively and cooperatively.

We are not naive to suggest that competition based on national interest will wither away. What we are calling for is an effective and genuine collective security system anchored in the principles of the Charter of the United Nations. A new collective security system would entail respecting the sovereignty of each State, preventive diplomacy and peaceful settlement of disputes. Achieving peace and security in a fragmented world would require a surge in diplomacy to find sustainable solutions that address the legitimate security concerns and fulfil the aspirations of all peoples. Diplomacy and mutual trust are the only way to avoid the danger of nuclear confrontation or war. Through diplomacy, we would be able to find common global frameworks that would harness the power of technology, including artificial intelligence, for peace and prosperity. An inclusive and balanced global system, together with breakthroughs in emerging technologies, would bring a great leap forward for humankind.

Ethiopia reaffirms the commitment to a world free of nuclear weapons. That is why Ethiopia can curse with the Secretary-General that “the only way to eliminate the nuclear risk is to eliminate nuclear weapons and banish them to the history books once and for all”. We know this will not be easy, but with political commitment and visionary leadership, it is not impossible.

The African continent has shown its unwavering commitment to regional peace and security through the signing of the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty. The Treaty seeks to ensure that nuclear weapons are not developed, produced, stockpiled, tested, acquired or stationed in Africa. In addition, the Treaty confirmed the basic and inalienable right of all States to the development, research, production and use of nuclear technology for peaceful purposes,

without discrimination. As a signatory of the Pelindaba Treaty, Ethiopia has a Treaty obligation not to develop, manufacture, acquire or process any nuclear explosive device. That is why Ethiopia supports the use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes only, mainly to meet the growing demand for energy, diagnostic purposes and other peaceful reasons.

In conclusion, my delegation reaffirms Ethiopia’s commitment to discharge all its Treaty obligations and looks forward to a productive deliberation of the Committee.

Mr. Mbingo (Eswatini): The Kingdom of Eswatini congratulates you, Mr. Chair, and the other members of the Bureau on your election as Chair of the First Committee during this seventy-eighth session and further assures you of Eswatini’s full support and cooperation during your tenure.

Eswatini aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representatives of the Republic of Indonesia and Nigeria, on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/78/PV.2) and the Group of African States (see A/C.1/78/PV.3), respectively, and wishes to make the following remarks in its national capacity.

Eswatini believes that this general debate could not have come at a better time, as the disarmament and non-proliferation regime is losing its grip. International security continues to deteriorate as the world faces immense challenges to peace and security.

In that regard, the Kingdom of Eswatini wishes to state that multilateral diplomacy remains the only fulcrum to address disarmament, non-proliferation and international security, in accordance with the principles and objectives that are enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. Eswatini believes that there are no substitutes for a constructive multilateral approach to addressing global disarmament issues, as opposed to using the laid down United Nations channels or protocols.

Nuclear weapons remain pivotal to international peace and security, as well as to global economic growth and development. The Kingdom of Eswatini therefore endeavours to seek more profound and concrete measures in pursuit of the objective of nuclear weapons disarmament in a verifiable and irreversible manner, within a clear time frame.

Eswatini believes that the continued existence of nuclear weapons not only remains an existential threat to humankind, but also as a global threat to nature. If nuclear-weapon States continue to possess and modernize these weapons of mass destruction, our collective security is in jeopardy.

The Kingdom of Eswatini welcomed and underscored the importance of resolution 70/34 as an integral part of multilateral disarmament efforts. Against that backdrop, Eswatini also raises its voice against nuclear-weapon States' resistance to dismantling their nuclear arsenals.

Eswatini reaffirms its commitment to the Treaty of Pelindaba, which declared the African region a nuclear-weapon-free zone. Eswatini further underscores the importance of continued respect for the inalienable right to peaceful uses of nuclear energy and stresses the central role played by the International Atomic Energy Agency through its continuing technical support, cooperation and optimization of the use of science and technology for socioeconomic development.

The Kingdom of Eswatini supports the objective of complete nuclear disarmament as the ultimate prerequisite for maintaining international peace and security. In that connection, Eswatini would like to point to the historic entry into force of the landmark Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which prohibits but is not limited to the development, testing production, manufacture, acquisition, possession and stockpiling of nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. My country will soon be signing that important Treaty, following the election of our new Parliament last week.

We remain deeply concerned about the illicit trade, transfer, manufacture, possession and circulation of small arms and light weapons and their excessive accumulation and uncontrolled spread in many regions of the world, including on the African continent. We remain committed to the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. We look forward to the fourth Review Conference on the Implementation of the Programme of Action, to be held in New York in June 2024, and we hope that substantive progress will be made in advancing its full and effective implementation. We also call for the full, balanced and effective implementation of the International Tracing Instrument and stress the urgency of intensifying efforts to promote international cooperation in this area. We therefore call for United Nations initiatives to support

the implementation of the Programme of Action, and for Member States to consider taking advantage of the expertise in this area available to developing countries such as those in Africa.

Mr. Babo (Cameroon) (*spoke in French*): My delegation congratulates you, Mr. Chair, on your election to lead the First Committee, and through you the other members of the Bureau. We assure you of our support and cooperation.

My delegation supports the achievement of general and complete disarmament under effective international oversight, which is one of the founding objectives of our Organization. We believe that the pursuit of that objective in the United Nations will enable the Organization to assert its role in the active maintenance of international peace and security and in advancing the principle of shared development prescribed by the founders of our Organization. At this critical time, my delegation stresses that we must continue to advance disarmament efforts, along with efforts to prevent the emergence of any new arms races, with a view to strengthening security for all. In that regard, we endorse the provisions of resolution 1378 (XIV), adopted on 20 November 1959, which enshrines the goal of negotiating general and complete disarmament. We also urge everyone to work to overcome the many existing obstacles, and to strengthen political will in this area in order to foster a climate of confidence. My delegation believes that disarmament is an essential element in the overall objective of maintaining peace and a prerequisite for defending our world and our future.

My delegation notes with concern that many challenges persist in the field of disarmament and international security and new threats continue to emerge. We call for the total elimination of all weapons of mass destruction, and we believe that the international community needs a reliable and fully functional disarmament mechanism to enable it to face international security challenges. In that regard, my delegation regrets that the first session of the Preparatory Committee for the eleventh Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, which should have assessed the impact of the consecutive failures of the past two Review Conferences, failed to produce the hoped-for results, attesting to the continuing crisis facing the non-proliferation regime, which remains the cornerstone of the nuclear disarmament regime.

For its part, Cameroon has ratified the main instruments underpinning the international non-proliferation and nuclear security regimes.

We believe firmly that establishing internationally recognized nuclear-weapon-free zones on the basis of arrangements freely concluded between the States of those regions — such as the Treaty of Pelindaba, which bans nuclear weapons in Africa — strengthens regional peace and security and the non-proliferation regime and contributes to achieving the goal of nuclear disarmament. My delegation hopes that the work of creating new nuclear-weapon-free zones will continue and will mobilize as many of us as possible. We also reaffirm the desire to see non-proliferation remain on the agendas of the United Nations bodies responsible for disarmament issues.

My delegation notes that technological developments are a reality that are making issues of international security ever more complex, posing major challenges on the security, legal and ethical fronts. However, we welcome the signs of hope for multilateral action that have emerged in 2023, in a particularly difficult context, including through the General Assembly's consensus on the importance of the Pact for the Future, which considers international peace and security fundamental and is in line with the Secretary-General's New Agenda for Peace, which recognizes that disarmament can and must serve as a preventive tool in support of global action for peace and security. My delegation calls on States to honour their commitments with a view to restoring a climate of confidence and improving the communication tools that we need in times of crisis. We also call for strengthening of the nuclear non-proliferation regime in response to growing regional security concerns and technological advances.

My delegation is concerned about the possibility of an arms race in outer space. Such a militarization of space activities would threaten not just the peaceful uses of space but the survival of humankind as a whole. We must therefore consider the best way to address the current challenges in the peaceful exploitation and uses of outer space and especially to prevent its weaponization. In that regard, Cameroon suggests that cooperation and the relevant foundational legal framework should be strengthened, but without undermining the right to develop and acquire technologies and equipment for the peaceful uses of outer space.

We are concerned about the devastating impact of small arms and light weapons in creating violence and its many victims. We also note the significant negative humanitarian and socioeconomic effects of the illicit manufacture, transfer, diversion and circulation of small arms and light weapons. Regarding the diversion

of arms in particular, which involves non-State actors or unauthorized users, my delegation would like to emphasize its major impact on security owing to its direct links with transnational organized crime. We call for greater international cooperation to strengthen the existing legal mechanisms, particularly through information exchanges on financial flows, in order to better control the circulation of such weapons. We hope that the Arms Trade Treaty will provide a response to illicit trafficking and the unregulated arms trade and help to prevent conflicts.

My delegation welcomed the adoption of the final report of the eighth Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects (A/CONF.192/BMS/2022/1). We hope to see countries' capacity to combat the trafficking of those weapons strengthened in line with the report. In that connection, we urge the United Nations to continue to facilitate negotiations on security and information at the global level.

My delegation would like to emphasize the link between disarmament and development, as provided for in Article 26 of the Charter of the United Nations, which urges for minimizing the diversion of the world's human and economic resources for armaments. We believe it is important to end the excessive accumulation of weapons, which diverts resources needed for development, fuels armed conflict and violence, causes death, suffering and social inequality and damages the environment.

(spoke in English)

My delegation would like to take this opportunity to welcome the five-year programme of activities for the period from 2020 to 2024 for implementing the Central African Convention for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons, Their Ammunition and All Parts and Components That Can Be Used for Their Manufacture, Repair and Assembly, whose overall aim is to contribute to the creation of a stable and secure security environment conducive to the economic development of States in Central Africa, and specifically to combat the excessive accumulation and circulation of light weapons and small arms in the subregion. My delegation welcomes international cooperation in strengthening the capacity of States in matters of disarmament, which has enabled Cameroon to be central to intense activity in that area. Among other things, with the help

of the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) and the main donors, Cameroon hosted the pilot phase of the Saving Lives Entity project on 9 and 10 August 2022 in the city of Kribi. With the support of UNODA, and for the benefit of the 11 countries of the subregion as part of the Global Partnership Support initiative, my country organized a regional meeting from 24 to 26 May on the universalization and effective implementation in Central Africa of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological or Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction. Recently, again with the support of UNODA, from 12 to 14 September Cameroon also organized a national workshop on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004).

To conclude, my delegation reiterates the importance of emphasizing what unites us rather than what divides us. We therefore call for agreement on a forward-looking approach based on action in a spirit of shared responsibility, which should be inclusive and based on dialogue, mutual trust and transparency. That is why we are calling for working together to define concrete and achievable measures, taking into account efforts already accomplished, objectively different situations and common perspectives. It is only through that pragmatic and realistic approach that tangible progress towards creating a safer world for all will be possible.

The Chair: I will now give the floor to those delegations wishing to exercise the right of reply.

I would like to remind members that statements in exercise of the right of reply are limited to five minutes for the first intervention and three minutes for the second. I will first give the floor to delegations that were unable to deliver their first or second interventions in exercise of the right of reply yesterday (see A/C.1/78/PV.7) due to time constraints.

Mr. Dvali (Georgia): Georgia is exercising its right to respond to the remarks made by the representative of the Russian Federation yesterday following Georgia's statement (see A/C.1/78/PV.7).

Russia mentioned that it recognized the so-called independence of Georgia's two occupied regions based on free expression of the popular will. We should remember that there are more than 300,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees from those regions as a result of Russia's decades-long aggressive policy towards Georgia. Those IDPs and refugees

represented an absolute majority of the population of those regions before they were forcibly expelled from their homes, and they continue to be deprived of their right to return. In the light of that situation, it is utterly hypocritical to justify an illegal occupation based on the so-called free will of the people. We want to reiterate that Russia has effective control over the occupied regions of Georgia, a fact that is well established in the judgments of the European Court of Human Rights and the International Criminal Court.

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

Mr. Bamya (Palestine): Yesterday, the Israeli Minister of Defence declared,

"I have ordered a complete siege of the Gaza Strip. There will be no electricity, no food, no fuel — everything is closed. We are fighting human animals and we are acting accordingly."

An Israeli Major General said,

"Human animals must be treated as such. There will be no electricity and no water. There will only be destruction. You wanted hell, you will get hell."

Make no mistake. They mean the 2 million Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, who are enduring yet another wave of collective punishment and dehumanization. What rights and what laws justify such inhumane actions? Israel has imposed a blockade on 2 million Palestinians for 17 years. It has carried out repeated assaults, claiming that it is acting in the name of security and destroying Hamas's military capabilities. It has accomplished neither, but has only inflicted pain and suffering on innocent civilians.

Consistency is a condition for credibility. When someone says that nothing justifies killing Israelis and in the same breath condones the killing of Palestinians, that is morally reprehensible, legally unacceptable and politically and humanly catastrophic. Palestinian civilians are no less deserving of protection, and Palestinian lives are no less worthy of respect. The families of the hundreds of Palestinians killed — overwhelmingly civilians — in the past 72 hours, including 150 children, deserve solidarity and compassion. As for the families whose every member has been killed, their memory should not be desecrated. We may not see them on our screens except as corpses under the rubble, the images blurred to avoid shocking the viewer. But their stories are there to be told, and we

should all know that while those who have been killed are people who endured a life of suffering, they still dared to hope and dream against all odds. They loved and were loved. They built and rebuilt. They showed courage and resilience in the face of one assault after another, hoping that one day they would not see only death and destruction on the horizon.

We must pray for them, speak up for them, act for them — for the 2 million Palestinians going to sleep as we speak. That is, if they manage to sleep, as they do not know whether they will wake up tomorrow. To abandon them is to abandon one's humanity and undermine our international law-based order. It serves neither the cause of justice nor the cause of peace. There is nowhere to go in Gaza, no safe haven or shelter while bombs are being dropped over their heads with no regard for their life or humanity. They have no time to mourn. They lie to their children, telling them that they will keep them safe and pray for a miracle. Humanitarian aid cannot reach them. We need to act to stop the madness and end the bloodshed.

Another reality is possible, without occupation or conflict, in which no Palestinians or Israelis are killed and where there is shared peace and security. We thought it would be obvious that this should be the goal that we all strive for.

Mr. Ghorbanpour Najafabadi (Islamic Republic of Iran): I am compelled to exercise our right of reply for the second time following the nonsensical statement delivered yesterday by the representative of the Israeli regime (see A/C.1/78/PV.7), which was obsessed with Iran and ready to blame us for its continuous failures, accusing Iran of interference in the region.

The world has acknowledged that the Israeli regime has engaged in oppressive, expansionist and criminal activities in the region. It has not forgotten the case against the Israeli regime pending before the International Criminal Court for the atrocity crimes it has committed against Palestinians for years. The regime continues to target and harm innocent people in occupied Palestine, including women and children, with weapons of mass destruction and other prohibited weapons. It is the only occupier in history that cries as if it were a victim. Through its dehumanization of the Palestinians, it absolves itself of the duty to fulfil any of its international obligations, showing not even a minimum level of respect for the rights of children, women and all other civilians in the occupied territories.

Furthermore, it persists in violating the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Syria and Lebanon, all while openly threatening the use of force against other countries in the region. The Israeli regime has also vowed to cancel the threats that its nuclear weapons pose to the region and beyond. To eliminate that threat, the international community must compel it to abandon its nuclear weapons, join the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and subject its nuclear activities and facilities to the International Atomic Energy Agency comprehensive safeguards system.

In fulfilling its responsibility to maintain international peace and security, the Security Council must similarly compel the regime to cease all its destabilizing and adventurist activities in the region. The Israeli regime has openly threatened the countries of the region with nuclear annihilation. Its Prime Minister just recently threatened us with such annihilation during the general debate of the General Assembly at its seventy-eighth session (see A/78/PV.10).

Mr. Al Ashkar (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): My delegation categorically rejects the statement made by the representative of Israel yesterday (see A/C.1/78/PV.7) on the use of chemical weapons in Syria. The allegations of Syria's use of such weapons are based only on the lies and propaganda of a hostile entity that is occupying Syrian land, and therefore lack credibility.

The facts in the Middle East are very clear and cannot be concealed by verbal trickery and manipulation. First among them is the fact that Israel is the only nuclear-weapon State in the region and possesses those weapons without any international oversight, which undermines security and stability in the region and poses a genuine threat to the non-proliferation regime, as well as putting the peoples and States of the region in serious danger. In that regard, I would like to ask some questions. Who builds nuclear military reactors and sneeringly claims to possess nuclear weapons equivalent to hundreds of warheads? Who stores nuclear waste in occupied territories? Who is attempting to change the identity of the occupied Syrian Arab Golan? Who is violating the airspace of sovereign States in the region and carrying out military attacks on them? It is of course the Israeli entity that is doing all those things.

Israel is the country that has brought terrorism to the Middle East since its days of assassinating United Nations personnel in the 1940s. Israel has also

perpetrated hundreds of massacres and heinous crimes against the Palestinian and Arab peoples, such as in Deir Yassin, Kafar Qasim, Jenin and Beit Hanoun in Palestine; Qana, Sabra and Shatila in Lebanon; and the occupied Syrian Golan. Israel continues to occupy Arab territories and to use internationally banned weapons against civilians, which is the highest manifestation of terrorism.

Mr. Grigoryan (Armenia): I have asked for the floor to exercise our delegation's right of reply for a second time to the misleading, false and cynical comments made by the representative of Azerbaijan (see A/C.1/78/PV.7). In attempting to justify Azerbaijan's aggression against the people of Nagorno-Karabakh, he has created confusion with his contradictory explanations. In December 2022, Azerbaijan blocked the Lachin corridor with a clear intention to use starvation as a method of warfare and create intolerable living conditions for the people of Nagorno-Karabakh.

First, Azerbaijan presented the barbaric siege as a peaceful demonstration by so-called eco-activists, which later turned into a so-called security measure. Alongside the blockade, Azerbaijan obstructed any international presence that could have verified the false nature of those assertions. On 22 February and on 11 July, the International Court of Justice issued provisional orders on the Lachin corridor, which Azerbaijan has continued to disregard. In the same way, the preplanned large-scale military aggression has been presented as self-defence, and the ethnic cleansing of more than 100,000 people has been presented as that country's sovereign right.

However, nothing can hide the fact that Azerbaijan's heavy military build-up over the years has posed an existential threat to the people of Nagorno-Karabakh, with open threats in violation of the limitations of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe and other mechanisms, continued refusals to institute any confidence-building measures, constant hate speech, the use of force to pursue its goals and its continuing notorious record of committing atrocity crimes. No one can deny that the inhuman blockade of the Lachin corridor and the aggression of 19 September were aimed at the ethnic cleansing of the Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh.

The fabricated, highly toxic and dangerous narratives that Azerbaijan disseminates within the framework of the United Nations are nothing more than

attempts to whitewash its crimes and create pretexts for future aggressions. They are a clear illustration of how Azerbaijan's militaristic policy, based on hatred and total disregard of international norms, threatens security and peace in our region.

The Chair: We have concluded the statements in exercise of the right of reply from yesterday's meeting (see A/C.1/78/PV.7). We will now hear statements in exercise of the right of reply from today's meeting.

Mr. Kim In Chol (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): My delegation feels compelled to take the floor to exercise its right of reply in response to statements made by the representatives of France, Belgium and Spain.

We categorically reject the outrageous accusations that those countries made about my country. France has dispatched its military forces to the waters off the Korean peninsula every year since 2019, on the pretext of implementing the Security Council sanctions resolutions against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Those are very dangerous moves, as they escalate the tensions in and around the Korean peninsula. Worse still, France reportedly plans to send a Falcon 200 patrol aeroplane this month to the waters off the Korean peninsula on the pretext of monitoring illegal naval activities. It is deplorable and pathetic that France seeks to enhance its status by registering itself as not absent in the roll call of the United States-led pressure campaign against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

France's reckless move is adding to the complexity and danger at a time when the military and political situation on the Korean peninsula is inching closer to the brink of a thermonuclear war, owing to the hostile military acts of the United States and its followers. France, which is seeing cracks even in the African region, had better remember that it may face an unexpected and unwanted challenge in matters in the Asia-Pacific region, which has become a flashpoint. France should retreat from its hot-headed Cold War mentality and face reality. Instead of copying another party that is captive to anachronistic gunboat diplomacy, France should therefore immediately cease its dangerous acts, so destructive of peace and security on the Korean peninsula and in North-East Asia, before it is too late.

The position and role of nuclear force in ensuring the security of Democratic People's Republic of Korea are an accurate reflection of the threats from outside

by hostile forces and the ever-changing current and future global geopolitical structure. It is an undeniable and stark reality that the United States and its vassal forces' ceaseless nuclear threats against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, which have persisted for more than half a century, have become a decisive factor in triggering the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's resort to nuclear weapons and constant strengthening of its nuclear force. As long as the reality of the United States' hostile policy and nuclear blackmail and threats exists, nuclear deterrence will be the choice of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea for assuring its future.

If the United States and other hostile forces seek to deprive the Democratic People's Republic of Korea of its constitutional position as a nuclear-weapon State by imposing denuclearization on it, that will be regarded as the most serious violation possible of the sovereignty and Constitution of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea reserves its inherent right to self-defence under the Charter of the United Nations and international law and will resolutely and overwhelmingly respond to all hostile acts aimed at depriving it of its sacred sovereign rights.

Ms. Maayan (Israel): I will not dignify some of the statements that we heard just now with a response. Yesterday my Palestinian colleague (see A/C.1/78/PV.7) wondered "why some feel that Palestinian families are not worthy of their condolences". I must have missed his condolences from my people. I must have missed his strong and clear condemnation of Hamas. The Palestinians are represented by people who in the face of some of the worst atrocities witnessed by humankind could not muster the moral integrity to condemn them. But we are different. We express our condolences for all Palestinians who have lived under the brutal rule of Hamas over the past 23 years. We feel for all Palestinians who are being put in harm's way and used as pawns and human shields by terrorist organizations such as Hamas and other terrorist allies. We mourn the loss of innocent lives — any innocent lives — because they are human lives. That is the difference between Hamas and us. The representative of the Palestinian Authority mentioned the need for humanity. He did that yesterday and today. Humanity is indeed needed in these dark times, in the light of the barbaric acts carried out by Hamas against my people. Humanity is needed to survive and keep strong in the light of such evil and hate. Humanity is

needed in order to fight such unmitigated savagery. I cannot comprehend the barbarity that I have seen on social media over the past few days. I cannot understand the horrific, deliberate shooting and slaughtering of women and babies that I have witnessed online. I cannot understand why the Palestinian representatives do not have it in themselves to condemn those acts or blame Hamas for its onslaught. Indeed, we all need to cling to our faith in humanity during these darkest of times.

Mr. Vorontsov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): At the outset, we reject all of the Georgian delegation's accusations about our country as groundless. Russia has recognized South Ossetia and Abkhazia based on the free expression of the will of the peoples of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, guided by the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations and other international documents. That is a fact and should be accepted. A number of other States' delegations represented in this room have made similar decisions, and I think that the sovereign decisions of those States must also be recognized.

We would also like to respond to the unsubstantiated statements by Western countries with regard to Russia's cooperation with Iran and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Our American and European colleagues should have long ago ceased to speculate about the allegations that Iran has been supplying drones to Russia or anywhere else by circumventing the procedures established by Security Council resolution 2231 (2015). We have repeatedly shared our views in that regard in New York, including in letters to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council. Nor will we stand idly by and leave the latest provocative statements without a response.

We note the artificial, unsubstantiated and politically motivated nature of the American and European claims against Tehran, which are based on groundless suspicions, unfounded statements and untenable conclusions presented as hard facts. No one has yet been able to demonstrate any conclusive material evidence of supplies of such means. Pictures of some equipment and wreckage compiled by the United States, the United Kingdom and their Ukrainian beneficiaries have no clear features indicating any link to Iran and so cannot be used to confirm the supply that Tehran is being accused of. Such so-called information products lack any credibility. It is impossible to establish the origin and the authenticity of the West's pseudo-proofs or to find out whether they were even

collected in Ukraine and not in other parts of the world where the United States and the United Kingdom have conducted their evidence-gathering operations.

We reject all the unverifiable insinuations by the United States and their allies regarding the development of bilateral cooperation between Russia and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. They are simply yet another cynical and hypocritical attempt to increase pressure on our countries and distract attention from the reckless, escalatory actions of Washington and its allies in the region, which are the true source of threats to international peace and security. The United States and its allies in the Republic of Korea and Japan are pursuing a policy aimed at strengthening the sanctions and military pressure on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Washington has significantly increased the scale and intensity of its joint combat training. The United States' strategic capabilities are being moved into the subregion on a rotational basis. We see more active steps to involve NATO in affairs on the Korean peninsula. Trilateral air defence exercises among the United States, the Republic of Korea and Japan are becoming increasingly regular. A mechanism for exchanging intelligence about the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's missile launches is being set up. Such military activities go beyond routine defence objectives. Their motives are obviously related to containing Russia and China, not merely countering the alleged North Korean threat.

For its part, Russia has always been against any military activities that threaten the security of the Korean peninsula and its neighbouring countries. We call for settling the nuclear and other issues on the Korean peninsula exclusively by political and diplomatic means through negotiations. We believe that the sanctions have fully exhausted their potential and have proved ineffective in pushing Pyongyang to suspend or dismantle its nuclear programme.

Mr. Gurbanov (Azerbaijan): It was not our intention to make another statement, but given the never-ending statements by the representatives of Armenia, we are compelled to do so.

Armenia should understand that the way to ensure peace and stability in the region is not by raising the issue in the First Committee with baseless claims. Needless to say, that is counterproductive and ill-suited to the Committee's purposes, which would be for Armenia to establish relations with its neighbour

Azerbaijan, based on respect for its territorial integrity and sovereignty and on constructive negotiations with Azerbaijan on a durable peace. Azerbaijan took counter-terrorism measures in order to prevent a potential large-scale provocation by Armenian armed forces that had not withdrawn from Azerbaijan's territory, contrary to the trilateral agreement, despite the fact that the Armenian representative has done his best to deny that with various fabrications. Any military units in the sovereign territories of Azerbaijan in violation of international law are a serious threat to regional peace and security, and Azerbaijan's actions are aimed at disbanding and disarming the illegal forces in our Garabagh region.

Against a backdrop of the new realities in the region, Armenia's destructive behaviour not only has no prospects but is also leading it into misery. Instead of replicating the patterns that have been typical of it for 30 years, Armenia should embrace the historic opportunity to establish peace and security in the region by abandoning its military and political provocations. In that regard, we demand that the Armenian side refrain from any provocative actions or statements that are likely to increase tensions in the region and from interfering in the internal affairs of Azerbaijan. Such attempts are futile. They deceive the people of Armenia and mislead the international community.

Mr. Al Ashkar (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): I have asked for the floor to exercise my right of reply to the statements made by the representatives of Belgium and France on the use of chemical weapons in Syria.

In that context, I would like to recall that Syria has repeatedly commented on the report of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and pointed out its shortcomings and defects. It lacks objectivity and professionalism and does not comply with the provisions of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC). Furthermore, the OPCW does not follow impartial investigation methods. I will not repeat those comments. I would simply like to know if the actions of the OPCW's Fact-Finding Mission team in receiving samples from unknown sources linked to the Jabhat Al-Nusra terrorists and its affiliates constitute a professional act in line with the Convention.

The two States whose representatives made allegations about my country, along with many other Western countries, have continued to take an approach

that undermines the work of the OPCW. They are behind politicized resolutions adopted by the Organization based on reports that were fabricated by Western intelligence services and anti-Syrian terrorists. The States that do such things are responsible for diverting the OPCW from its technical role and politicizing its work, using intimidation and persuasion to compel it to adopt resolutions that are blatantly contrary to the provisions of the CWC.

Syria has eliminated its entire stockpile of chemical weapons. It continues to cooperate constructively with the OPCW and has never once delayed or hesitated to cooperate with it in various areas, including by providing accurate information that demonstrates that terrorist parties are using chemical weapons with the direct and indirect support of parties in the region and beyond. Moreover, Syria previously provided the Secretary-General, successive Presidents of the Security Council and the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1540 (2004) with detailed and documented information on how the Governments of various States that support terrorists have facilitated terrorist organizations' access to the toxic chemicals used by those organizations against civilians and the Syrian army.

Based on its firm position of rejecting the use of chemical weapons as unacceptable, immoral, condemnable and unjustifiable, Syria implemented all its obligations under the CWC and disposed of all its chemical weapons in record time. Those who falsely accuse Syria are deliberately ignoring the possession of toxic chemicals by armed terrorist groups such as Jabhat Al-Nusra and Da'esh and their attacks on civilians.

Speaking of accountability, against the backdrop of lies related to the use of chemical weapons, I would like to say that the States that are involved in military aggressions against sovereign States deserve to be held accountable. The States that have practiced and continue to maintain a policy aimed at starving the Syrian people by imposing unilateral coercive measures that violate the principles of international law and the Charter must be held accountable, as must the countries that have facilitated the transit of thousands of terrorists into Syria and provided terrorist groups with every kind of support and with political and media platforms.

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

Mr. Bamyá (Palestine): When we are speaking here we represent our Governments, and the reason that the Israeli representatives cannot address us as Palestine or as the State of Palestine is that their Government does not recognize my people. It is not the Palestinian Government that is dropping bombs on Israel. It is Israel that is dropping bombs on Palestinians. We are not occupying Israel. It is Israel that is occupying our land.

When the Israeli representative speaks about the Palestinians killed and says that the Israelis mourn them, she is holding us responsible for our own deaths. They blame us. They do not recognize our right to self-determination or our national rights. They recognize only our right to die and to be held responsible for our deaths, and they assert that Israel, which is killing us, cannot be held accountable for our deaths. They always have to kill us — it is never Israel's fault. Who is being killed? It is Palestinian civilians. Can anyone here justify that or explain how it is useful, how it is helpful, how it is conducive to a future of peace and coexistence? It is impossible. I come from a legal background. If anyone here can explain how indiscriminate attacks and the targeting of civilians can be justified under international law, I am ready to hear it. What is this right to self-defence that allows the massacre of civilians? I have never heard of it.

Our position is clear, and we did not come up with it today. When thousands of Palestinians were killed in 2008 and 2009 and 2012 and 2014 and 2016 — thousands of Palestinians — we did not come here and say that we are now justified in killing those who killed us, and that is our response. We said that there must be a peaceful way out. An eye for an eye will make the whole world blind. We cannot continue justifying the death of Palestinians. It is not possible. It is inhumane. It is racist. It is supremacist. It is not about the religion or the national identity or the origin of the people being killed. It is about them being killed. We are for upholding international law for all. We submit to the authority of the Charter of the United Nations, international humanitarian law and international human rights law. We are for the protection of all civilians. We are for a peaceful way to end this conflict on a basis of United Nations resolutions and international law. We are ready to implement all United Nations resolutions tomorrow. Can the Israeli representative say the same?

The Israeli representative's Permanent Representative and Prime Minister say that they do not recognize the State of Palestine and will never allow a

State of Palestine to be independent. They are colonizing our land. In the rules we know about, is there something that authorizes colonial settlements? Is there something that allows racial discrimination? Is there something that allows a blockade of more than 2 million people for 17 years? And then we say there is war when Israelis are killed. And yet we came back and said let us find a peaceful way, let us stop the bloodshed. We are trying to act responsibly and humanely, for Palestinians' sake, for Israelis' sake, for the region's sake. There can be no way forward in this manner. Continuing to deny Palestinian humanity and rights is not a way forward. It will always lead to violence. It will always lead to bloodshed. How did all the Member States that became independent do it? Would they have accepted remaining under foreign subjugation and domination? If they can accept it for themselves, we can accept it for ourselves, but they cannot say that they must be free and that the Palestinians can remain under occupation.

Those who are now expressing solidarity with Israel need to be clear. What Israel are they talking about? The extreme right-wing Government that has an annexationist agenda? The one that is killing our civilians today? When one justifies one's killing, there is always someone who will justify that killing. We are trying to find a different path forward. That is the humane and responsible thing to do. So when the Israeli representative asks about this, she should start by saying "Palestine", by recognizing their rights and by

taking responsibility for the bombs they are dropping, and then we can have peace. We are working for peace. We believe in peace as the only option for all peoples and all nations. That is the future we want. It starts today. We are failing the test that we have collectively undergone today. We uphold the rule of law for all.

Mrs. Maayan (Israel): I am not a lawyer. I am a human being. My people were slaughtered — we are talking about more than 1,000 people — in an act of barbaric terrorism by the terrorist organization Hamas, which declared war on my country. We will defend our people. We will defend our civilians, and I will continue to wait for a condemnation from the Palestinian Authority representative of the horrible, inhumane actions we have seen — filmed by the perpetrators, filmed by the terrorists, shared with the world.

The Chair: We have exhausted the time available for this meeting. The next meeting of the Committee will be held tomorrow afternoon at 3 p.m. sharp in this conference room. The Committee is expected to conclude its general debate and will hear statements from civil society in an informal setting at the conclusion of the debate.

Before we adjourn, delegations are reminded that the deadline for submission of all draft proposals is this Thursday, 12 October, at noon.

The meeting rose at 6.10 p.m.