



# General Assembly

Seventy-eighth session

## First Committee

19<sup>th</sup> meeting

Monday, 23 October 2023, 3 p.m.  
New York

Official Records

*Chair:* Mr. Paulauskas . . . . . (Lithuania)

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

### Agenda items 90 to 106 (continued)

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

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

Delegations wishing to exercise the right of reply will be able to do so at the end of the day. In accordance with the decision taken this morning, the Committee will convene an additional plenary meeting tomorrow at 10 a.m. in Conference Room 2. Before I open the floor for our discussion on conventional weapons, I would like to remind all delegations to respect the time limit for statements during the thematic segment.

**Ms. Carr** (Australia): Effective conventional arms control is a priority for Australia. While States have a legitimate right to acquire and use conventional weapons for self-defence, the methods and means of use are not unlimited. International humanitarian law balances military necessity with humanitarian considerations and must be strictly adhered to by all parties to armed conflict.

Australia welcomed the adoption, last year, of the Political Declaration on Strengthening the Protection of Civilians from the Humanitarian Consequences Arising from Use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas, which outlines practical measures for strengthening the

implementation of international humanitarian law in the context of urban conflict.

We must also redouble our efforts to put an end to the suffering caused by cluster munitions and anti-personnel landmines. Russian forces’ abhorrent use of cluster munitions in targeted attacks against civilians and civilian objects in Ukraine constitutes a serious violation of international humanitarian law, which Australia condemns in the strongest possible terms. Australia is also gravely concerned by the ongoing new landmine contamination in Myanmar. The effects of explosive remnants of war linger long after conflict, as several of our Pacific Island neighbours know all too well. In 2023, Australia elevated its support for Pacific States in order to address unexploded ordnance from the Second World War as part of our multimillion-dollar contribution to humanitarian demining.

The unregulated and illicit transfer of conventional arms fuels violence, undermines development and can destabilize entire regions. Australia is a long-standing champion of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT). It is a means of achieving a well-regulated international arms trade and preventing the diversion of arms to illicit markets — aims that complement and reinforce the Sustainable Development Goals. As we enter the tenth year since the ATT’s entry into force, we look forward to reorienting our work programme to address practical implementation challenges. We also call on all States yet to do so, in particular major exporters and importers, to join that vital treaty.

Complementing the ATT, the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms is a vital transparency

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tool that can build confidence and help to limit the destabilizing accumulation of arms. Australia consistently reports to the Register, and we urge other States to do the same. Implementing national export control systems to regulate arms transfers can be complex and administratively burdensome, particularly for smaller States. That is why Australia is committed to providing international assistance, including through the ATT Voluntary Trust Fund and the United Nations Trust Facility Supporting Cooperation on Arms Regulation.

New technologies and the advancing digitalization present both opportunities and risks for arms control, from new methods and mark and trace weapons to new possibilities to circumvent regulation. Next year's 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 should continue to explore how best to respond to such risks and opportunities.

Improvised explosive devices (IEDs) remain a growing threat, and production methods are constantly evolving. Stemming the flow of materials and equipment used for IEDs must remain an urgent priority for the international community. Explosives used in IEDs are often diverted from poorly secured ammunition stockpiles, which is one reason why this year's conclusion of a global framework for the through-life tracking and tracing of conventional ammunition is so significant. We look forward to its formal adoption by the General Assembly and its subsequent implementation.

Australia remains committed to the substantive discussions under way in the Group of Governmental Experts on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (GGE) of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons. Such issues are complex, but we have made important progress. We want the GGE to continue to deepen its consideration of proposals and elaborate prohibitions and regulations on autonomous weapons on the basis of international humanitarian law.

Weapon reviews are a critical guardrail for ensuring that all weapons systems are capable of being used in compliance with international humanitarian law, which is why Australia will host a second expert workshop in 2024 to further examine new challenges and best practices for conducting reviews of weapons

with autonomous functions for States to adopt. As we continue to grapple with those complex issues, we must also ensure that conventional arms forums are diverse and inclusive. Australia recognizes the vital contributions of civil society, and we will continue to champion the need for gender-mainstreaming in our work.

**Ms. Mocanu (Romania):** While Romania fully aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union (see A/C.1/78/PV.18), I would like to make the following remarks in my national capacity.

The Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) is designed to foster international and regional peace, security and stability and reduce human suffering by preventing and eradicating the illicit trade in conventional arms and their diversion. Since its entry into force, the ATT has made considerable progress, and today its objective and purpose are supported by 113 States Members of the United Nations as States parties and 28 as signatory States.

Romania has been a firm supporter of the Arms Trade Treaty since the inception of its negotiation process. We have also been privileged to be among the first States to directly contribute to its entry into force. Over the years, the ATT community has expanded and has tirelessly worked to implement and consolidate export control policies at the national level to attain full compliance with the Treaty's obligations. As responsible nations, our efforts should never stop. There is already considerable common ground, and States parties can build on the significant work that has been done so far.

Romania is honoured to have been elected President of the tenth Conference of States Parties to the ATT. Next year will mark 10 years since the entry into force of the Treaty. Looking ahead to that important milestone, a priority of the Romanian presidency is to take stock of the substantial work that we have done so far and to facilitate concrete discussions on practical aspects of implementation, while addressing the actual challenges faced. We need to take the necessary action to ensure its sustainability. That is key to achieving our common objectives of reducing human suffering and contributing to peace, security and stability.

We welcome the discussions at the ninth Conference of States Parties to the ATT on the role of industry in responsible international transfers of conventional arms under the stewardship of the Republic of Korea. Consistent national efforts to ensure industry's

awareness and compliance with national transfer control systems can bring about substantial support for the Treaty's effective implementation. Likewise, in this cycle, the Romanian presidency will promote a thematic discussion on the role of inter-agency cooperation in the effective implementation of the ATT, which has a clear impact on multiple aspects related to the effective and full implementation of the Treaty.

Romania has the honour to introduce to the First Committee the Arms Trade Treaty draft resolution A/C.1/78/L.42. The draft text before the Committee includes technical updates with agreed language, reflecting the progress of the work under the Treaty and oriented to future efforts of the United Nations in addressing responsible international trade in conventional arms. We count on Member States' broad support and, of course, their co-sponsorship.

**Mr. Del Rosario Vela** (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, on behalf of Spain, I would like to associate myself with the statement of the European Union (see A/C.1/78/PV.18), to which my country fully subscribes. I would like to add the following remarks in my national capacity.

The increase in the arms trade in an unstable world with many active armed conflicts compels us to work together to ensure conditions for the security of the communities most affected by violence. This year we welcomed the accession of Andorra and Ghana to the Arms Trade Treaty, but deeply regretted the absence of major arms exporters, especially given the aspirations for universalization. We appreciate the involvement of civil society organizations, not only in their role of scrutinizing the Treaty's implementation but also in that of condemning existing shortcomings and focusing on the main problems.

We also welcome the inclusion of the recommendations in the working documents under consideration, including the Small Arms Survey, co-sponsored by Spain, on the implementation of the gender perspective. Spain is concerned about the risk posed by the diversion of conventional ammunition of all types and calibres to unauthorized recipients, including organized criminal groups and terrorists, as well as the potential threat posed by stockpiles that do not follow adequate management protocols. Accidental explosions of ammunition stockpiles have affected more than 60 countries around the world and have resulted in thousands of casualties over the past 15 years. We

welcome the draft global framework for through-life conventional ammunition management, which will help to save lives and alleviate human suffering.

We have built a solid framework to address the challenges posed by the proliferation of small arms and light weapons through instruments such as the Arms Trade Treaty, the Programme of Action to Prevent Illicit Trafficking in Small Arms and Light Weapons, the Modular Small-arms-control Implementation Compendium and the International Ammunition Technical Guidelines, which seek to mitigate the negative impact of increased armed violence. Such proliferation also facilitates the perpetration of terrorist acts and violates international humanitarian law.

Spain remains committed to supporting demining efforts. At the recent International Donor Conference on Humanitarian Demining in Ukraine, Spain announced a contribution of €1.5 million to address the situation resulting from the Russian aggression against Ukraine. We actively participate in the relevant forums of the treaties and make the capabilities of our institutions available to the international community through various training courses at different levels and demining activities carried out by our armed forces deployed in peacekeeping operations, in particular through the Spanish International Demining Centre. Suffice it to say that, since 1999, the Centre has trained more than 1,300 operators and trainers from 27 countries, mainly from Latin America.

Given the widespread suffering caused by anti-personnel mines, we have seen considerable progress made in the clearance of landmines in a large number of affected territories. However, it is clear that there is still a long way to go to jointly achieve a world free of anti-personnel mines.

In recent times, we have seen a significant increase in the use of improvised explosive devices being used as anti-personnel mines, mainly by non-State actors. Action 21 of the Oslo Action Plan ensures the application of the Convention to those devices. Their use gives rise to new challenges, as they can appear in areas that have already been declared mine-free, thereby undermining the Convention's aim of ending the suffering and casualties caused by anti-personnel mines.

As we celebrate the eleventh Meeting of States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions, we wish to highlight the humanitarian progress achieved through the Convention since its entry into force.

Over the past year, Spain has led efforts towards the universalization of the Treaty, which will continue to be one of our priorities in order to achieve the effective prohibition of all types of use, production, stockpiling and transfer of cluster bombs. Our commitment to the Lausanne Action Plan and the Convention is strong and ongoing, as expressed through our voluntary contributions to its Implementation Support Unit.

New technologies open up new possibilities, but also new challenges, for the non-proliferation and disarmament regime. The rapid development of artificial intelligence brings with it benefits, but also implies potential risks to the safety and health of individuals if it does not include an appropriate regulatory framework.

We underscore the need to address the challenges and concerns surrounding lethal autonomous weapons systems, while recognizing the work of the Group of Governmental Experts on Emerging Technologies in the Field of Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems, and we encourage further understanding of the implications flowing from its use. Spain strongly supports a new mandate for the Working Group that establishes the steps to reach the ultimate goal of negotiating a legally binding instrument.

**Mr. Van Der Haegen** (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): Armed violence often causes humanitarian crises and undermines peacebuilding and development efforts. It is all the more important to step up efforts to prevent, mitigate and address the impacts of conventional weapons. In that regard, I would like to highlight three points that deserve particular attention.

First, the successful outcome of the Open-ended Working Group on Conventional Ammunition is an important element in the conventional arms control architecture. The negotiation process demonstrated that, when delegations show the necessary political will, widely supported multilateral solutions accommodating the varying needs, capacities and priorities of States can be reached. The global framework now requires effective implementation by all States to live up to the expectations enshrined therein. In that regard, we welcome the fact that national ownership and international cooperation and assistance are at the core of the global framework, as they will be key to its success. In the same spirit, we welcome the fact that the framework includes a follow-up process that focuses

in particular on implementation, exchange of lessons learned and international cooperation and assistance.

Secondly, contamination from mines, cluster munitions and other explosive ordnance remains a persistent threat to civilians. Switzerland is deeply concerned about the use of cluster munitions and anti-personnel mines in various contexts and the resulting increase in the number of victims. In line with the Oslo and Lausanne Action Plans of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Treaty and the Convention on Cluster Munitions, respectively, we condemn any use of those weapons and call upon all parties to conflicts not to use them.

Earlier this year, Switzerland published its action plan on mine action for the period 2023 to 2026, the key priorities of which are to promote the normative framework, support mine action on the ground and foster innovation. While continuing our support to other States, we place a particular focus on Ukraine. Since the beginning of Russia's military aggression against Ukraine, Switzerland has provided more than CHF15 million to address contamination from mines and other explosive ordnance as a result of armed conflict. Last month, the Swiss Government agreed an additional CHF100 million for humanitarian mine action in Ukraine for the period 2024-2027.

We are gravely concerned by the heavy toll paid by civilians in armed conflict. The implementation of the Political Declaration on Strengthening the Protection of Civilians from the Humanitarian Consequences Arising from Use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas is of particular relevance in that regard. We call upon all States that have not yet done so to support the Declaration, and we look forward to the follow-up conference, to be organized by Norway in 2024.

Thirdly, it is crucial to address the challenges posed by autonomous weapons systems, and we stress the importance of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons in that context. Specifically, we believe that, on the one hand, autonomous weapons systems that are not compliant with international humanitarian law should not be developed or used. Meanwhile, other such weapons systems should be regulated to ensure that their use and effects comply with international humanitarian law at all times. We welcome the increasing support for clear rules applicable to autonomous weapons and the emerging consensus around that two-tier approach.



As an early sponsor of the new draft resolution on autonomous weapons systems submitted to the Committee (A/C.1/78/L.56), Switzerland seeks to provide the CCW with the necessary impetus to start negotiations towards the regulation of such weapons systems, while placing international humanitarian law and human control at their centre.

**Mr. Nena** (Lesotho): Lesotho aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (NAM) (see A/C.1/78/PV.18). I now wish to make the following remarks in my national capacity.

We remain fully committed to engaging in any balanced, multilateral endeavour that aims to tackle the multiple challenges and threats arising from the illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons.

Conventional arms consistently draw the highest resources from national budgets. They also remain the major cause of casualties and destruction in armed conflict, unfortunately exerting the heaviest toll on civilians in most cases. The African continent faces constant and severe threats due to the increasing illicit flows and intentional transfers of small arms and light weapons to terrorists and other armed groups.

We are convinced that improved security and protection for all can be achieved at significantly lower levels of armament. What is required is the building of trust and confidence around commonly agreed norms and rules. Measures to ensure effective export control, arms control, non-proliferation, disarmament and transparency in armaments have a direct, positive bearing on international peace and security, and they must be resolutely promoted.

As we gather here today, escalating geopolitical tensions continue to threaten the conventional arms control and disarmament architecture. Confidence- and security-building measures and instruments that have served us well for decades are being undermined. We must therefore act collectively to preserve what we have and endeavour to make further progress at a time when established norms are being severely challenged.

It is paramount to reduce the human suffering associated with the illicit trade and trafficking in small arms and light weapons and their ammunition. Such weapons have a serious impact on the humanitarian situation of civilians, and they exacerbate conflict and

pervasive crime worldwide, including in our subregion of Southern Africa.

Lesotho staunchly supports the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT). By establishing effective international norms and standards and support for capacity-building and cooperation, the ATT counteracts the illicit trade in, and diversion of, a wide range of arms. In that vein, we reaffirm our full support for the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects as an essential multilateral instrument that contributes to the eradication of illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons.

However, new technologies, particularly autonomous weapons systems, have the potential to quash our efforts to combat the illegal arms trade. It is our considered view that such autonomous weapons systems do not comply with humanitarian law and should not be developed or used. We wish to underscore the need to exert appropriate control, judgment and involvement in the use of weapons systems in order to ensure that any use is in compliance with international law. We welcome the successful conclusion of the eighth Biennial Meeting of States on Small Arms, held in June 2022, as well as the consensual adoption of its outcome document. We also look forward to the convening of the fourth Conference to Review Progress Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action in 2024 to further elaborate on issues related to the diversion of small arms and light weapons to unauthorized recipients and implement the consensual conclusions of the eighth Biennial Meeting of States in that connection. We further look forward to the rapid establishment of the fellowship programme proposed by NAM to provide training to developing countries on small arms and weapons-related issues, in line with the recommendations of the outcome document of the eighth Biennial Meeting of States. The consensus achieved at the Biennial Meeting on implementation of the Programme of Action showed Member States' willingness to jointly move forward with the necessary discussions given the implementation challenges, including regarding the International Tracing Instrument. We have a window of opportunity to address those challenges by clarifying and elaborating adequate norms and rules.

In conclusion, I wish to stress the importance of the Arms Trade Treaty's central aspect of the common

effort against the transfer of conventional weapons to undesirable recipients.

**Mr. Mohamedou** (Mauritania): In the light of the unfolding genocide in Gaza, at the outset, let me say clearly and loudly that Mauritania strongly condemns the heinous crimes and horrific massacres being committed by the Israeli occupying Power, resulting so far in thousands of martyrs and injuries of women, children and unarmed civilians. We call on the international community to assume its legal and moral responsibilities to impose an immediate cessation of the genocide to which the Palestinian people are subjected and provide them with urgent protection and humanitarian aid.

My delegation aligns itself with the statements delivered by the representative of Nigeria, on behalf of the Group of African States, and by the representative of Indonesia, on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/78/PV.18). We also align ourselves with the statement to be made by the representative of Jordan on behalf of the Group of Arab States. I would also like to make the following remarks in my national capacity.

Given the correlation between the prosperity of terrorist groups, organized criminal organizations and illegal armed groups and the ease with which those groups can acquire small and light weapons, as part of its efforts to combat that phenomena in order to maintain and sustain peace at the regional and global levels, my country attaches great importance to the eradication of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, and therefore stresses the need for the complete and effective implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and the International Tracing Instrument. We look forward to a successful and productive outcome of the upcoming fourth United Nations Conference to Review Progress Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action, to be held next year.

We remain deeply concerned over the increasing illicit transfer, manufacture and circulation of small arms and light weapons (SALW) and their excessive accumulation and uncontrolled spread to unauthorized recipients in many regions of the world, especially in Africa, where silencing the guns is a precondition for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the African Union Agenda 2063. We

therefore call on all States, in particular major producing States, to ensure that the supply of small arms and light weapons is limited only to Governments or entities duly authorized by them. However, that should not under any circumstances undermine the sovereign right of States to acquire, manufacture, export, import and retain conventional arms and their relevant parts, components and ammunition for self-defence, as prescribed by the Charter of the United Nations.

We welcome the adoption of the final report of the Open-ended Working Group established pursuant to resolution 76/233 (see A/78/111) and the agreement by the Group to recommend to the Assembly the adoption of the global framework for through-life conventional ammunition management as a voluntary global framework of political commitments for strengthening and promoting existing initiatives on, and addressing existing gaps in, through-life conventional ammunition management. We also welcome the successful outcome of the ninth Conference of States Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty, recently held in Geneva, and reiterate our commitment to its implementation.

As a State party to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, while we reiterate our commitment to fully implementing the Oslo Action Plan for a mine-free world by 2025, we believe that, even with the substantial progress made so far, great challenges remain, especially in removing existing mines and relieving the suffering of the injured and their families worldwide.

In conclusion, the widespread proliferation of the approximately 1 billion small arms in circulation around the world continues to fuel violence and conflicts, thereby posing the greatest threat to peace and sustainable development. We call on the international community to strengthen efforts to overcome that phenomenon and save millions of potential victims of conflicts as a result of the proliferation and flow of conventional arms.

**Mr. Belusov** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The Russian Federation has consistently called for further strengthening of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) regime through the universalization of the Convention and its protocols, as well as the bona fide implementation of their provisions. We welcome the outcomes of the CCW sixth Review Conference and Meeting of States Parties. We appreciate the outcome of the work of the CCW Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) on

Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems in 2023, which was able to adopt a report with meaningful conclusions and recommendations, thereby laying the foundation for further discussions on lethal autonomous weapons systems under the Convention.

We view the GGE on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems as the best possible platform for discussing issues related to the military use of artificial intelligence technologies. The forum effectively strikes a reasonable balance between humanitarian concerns and the legitimate defence interests of countries in relation to respective weapons systems. We believe that it is necessary to continue the work in that format on the basis of the current mandate of the GGE, the agreed agenda and the principle of consensus. We therefore think that it is counterproductive to transfer the issue of lethal autonomous weapons systems to any other international platform, including the United Nations.

Today there is the urgent problem of improvised explosive devices (IEDs), which are a major cause of military and civilian casualties, posing a severe threat to populations. We see the need for an expert discussion on that topic within the CCW Amended Protocol II. However, any proposals regarding future work on IEDs should be consistent with the scope and purpose of the Convention. We support the idea of regularly updating the body of existing guidelines, best practices and other recommendations aimed at addressing the issues of the diversion and illicit use of materials for IED production.

In the context of compliance with the CCW, the international community should condemn and respond to the criminal actions of the Kyiv regime. The number of daily violations by Ukrainian troops of the norms and principles of international humanitarian law, including the deployment of heavy weapons in residential areas, the use of civilians as human shields and the use of civilian infrastructure for military purposes, demonstrates the deliberate use of inhumane tactics of combat, in violation of international humanitarian law.

We have documented incidents of the targeted mining of civilian infrastructure by Ukrainian armed troops. The most egregious example of that is the placement of *lepestok* PFM-1 anti-personnel mines, or butterfly mines, in a number of towns and cities in Donbas. Moreover, that is being done using cluster munitions supplied by the United States of America.

All of that is a direct violation of the basic principles of international humanitarian law, including

the CCW Amended Protocol II. At the same time, Kyiv is also in violation of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Treaty, to which it has been a party since 2006. According to United Nations data, Kyiv was to destroy more than 6.5 million mines of various types as part of its obligations under the Ottawa Treaty. However, the reality shows that that destruction was only on paper. We call on States Members of the United Nations to influence the Ukrainian authorities and take effective measures to ensure that the Kyiv regime complies with its international obligations and prevents the severe humanitarian consequences of its actions for the civilian population.

Russia attaches great importance to the implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons. We advocate increasing its practical impact and strengthening national controls throughout the life cycle of those weapons, from their production to their disposal. We pay close attention to the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms as one of the main mechanisms for transparency and ensuring international security by monitoring and identifying destabilizing accumulations of weapons in certain regions of the world. At the same time, we are wary of attempts by a number of countries to expand the scope of the Register.

We continue to believe that it would be inappropriate to accede to the Arms Trade Treaty. The standards set by the Treaty are substantially lower than Russian standards. In addition, the practical application of the Treaty also raises serious questions. It is absolutely unacceptable that certain parties continue to supply military products directly or indirectly to areas of armed conflict.

**Ms. Saggese** (United Kingdom): The effective control of conventional weapons is a priority for the United Kingdom and is a goal that should unite us all. The diversion and misuse of conventional weapons, particularly small arms and light weapons, and the continued use of cluster munitions and landmines are responsible for thousands of civilian casualties, both in and after conflict. That undermines security, hinders sustainable development and fuels conflict, crime and terrorism. Tackling that scourge demands close work across the international community, while recognizing the differential impact of such issues on women, men, girls and boys. To counter such threats, the full,

meaningful and effective participation of women across all efforts is necessary.

The Arms Trade Treaty is crucial to our approach to countering the illicit and destabilizing proliferation of conventional weapons. The Treaty is in a stronger position following the ninth Conference of States Parties and as we approach 10 years since its entry into force. We welcome the recent accession of Gabon and Andorra. The United Kingdom will continue to work with all relevant actors, including through improved engagement with industry, to realize the Treaty's objectives, strengthen cooperation and reduce the supply of, and demand for, illicit weapons. In order to tackle illicit or destabilizing arms, we must improve the management of ammunition. In that regard, the United Kingdom welcomes the successful conclusion of the Open-ended Working Group on Conventional Ammunition. The implementation of the ambitious draft global framework will help us all to make effective improvements.

The United Kingdom is committed to reporting through the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms. We welcome the recent increase in reporting to the Register, and we encourage greater compliance and transparency in reporting, which is important to building confidence and mitigating against the excessive or destabilizing accumulation of arms.

In parallel to reducing instability and conflict, we must continue to focus on international humanitarian law and the protection of civilians in conflict. The United Kingdom strongly condemns the appalling act of terrorism committed by Hamas. We support Israel in its legitimate effort to defend itself and its people. While we work with all partners in the region to de-escalate tensions, we call on all parties to act in accordance with international humanitarian law. Furthermore, in that regard, Russia's continued use of cluster munitions, anti-personnel mines and other indiscriminate weapons in ways that contravene international humanitarian law following its brutal and illegal invasion of Ukraine remains a cause for significant concern.

The United Kingdom was proud to join 83 nations in adopting the Political Declaration on Strengthening the Protection of Civilians from the Humanitarian Consequences Arising from the Use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas, in Dublin last year. We are working to implement its commitments, and we encourage other States to do the same.

We were also pleased to see progress at the eleventh Meeting of States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM), including welcoming Nigeria and South Sudan to the Convention and the announcements by Bulgaria, Slovakia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and South Africa on the fulfilment of their obligations. We look forward to seeing progress under the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, while recognizing the scale of the remaining challenge, including in Ukraine, with issues arising from Russia's illegal invasion.

In that context, the United Kingdom's Global Mine Action Programme remains our main vehicle for funding mine action under the CCM and the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Treaty. Under the Programme, we have confirmed commitments in Afghanistan and Ukraine, and we expect to shortly be in a position to announce a new £17 million multi-country project that will cover Angola, Cambodia, Ethiopia, Laos, Myanmar, Somalia, South Sudan and Zimbabwe. The United Kingdom also continues to invest in exploring alternative sources of funding to address the long-standing shortfalls.

We welcome the ongoing substantive discussions in the Group of Governmental Experts on Emerging Technologies in the Area of Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems under the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW). In May, the United Kingdom joined 51 other States in a joint statement, demonstrating that, despite differences, many CCW high contracting parties share some common views. It is important that the Group build common ground in that constructive spirit, consolidating areas of agreement and clearly establishing where divergences exist. In addition, the Group must deepen its understanding of key issues such as compliance with international humanitarian law and how to maintain context-appropriate human control and accountability.

Finally, we call on all States to work in good faith, support the functioning of all relevant treaties and structures and join us in pursuing a future that is more peaceful than our past.

**Mr. Eshragh Jahromi** (Islamic Republic of Iran): At the outset, the Islamic Republic of Iran once again conveys its unwavering solidarity and heartfelt condolences to the resilient nation of Palestine. We strongly condemn the heinous crimes committed by the Israeli regime. The United States substantial military support to the Israeli regime, including the transfer



of billions of dollars' worth of weaponry, even from its own stockpiles, exacerbates the suffering of the Palestinian people.

My delegation associates itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/78/PV.18).

The Charter of the United Nations, in particular Article 51, firmly upholds the sovereign and inherent rights of States to acquire, manufacture, export, import and retain conventional arms for self-defence and security. No regulation of conventional armaments or any multilateral processes, including the Group of Governmental Experts and the Open-ended Working Group, can infringe upon those rights. Each State's prerogative to determine its conventional capabilities and requirements, in line with legitimate defence and security needs, as well as the structure, doctrine and equipment of its military and security forces, must be acknowledged. For the credibility and effective implementation of outcome documents, consensus should be genuinely and equally observed.

The seventh and eighth Biennial Meetings of States on Small Arms and the Open-ended Working Group on Conventional Ammunition provide valuable lessons. We acknowledge their results, especially the positive aspects for developing countries, such as the need to enhance international cooperation, technical and technological assistance, financial support, capacity-building and fellowship programmes. However, we are mindful of the views expressed by several States on divergent points, even if they did not impede consensus. That signals the need for careful attention to avoid potential process failures.

We recognize the ongoing discussions on the impact of new technologies on warfare and weaponry, including conventional arms. From our perspective, like many historical inventions, that new trend can bring about both advantages and disadvantages. It is our responsibility to mitigate its adverse implications, with a strong emphasis on ensuring that developing countries are not left behind. We vehemently oppose technology monopolies and double standards and urge the United Nations to address any policies or positions that obstruct developing countries' access to new technologies, including through unilateral coercive measures, especially when imposed by non-compliant States.

For instance, the United States of America and certain Western nations are known for extensive arms transfers to conflict-prone regions and impose targeted sanctions beyond United Nations resolutions. That is a clear contradiction of international law. Furthermore, the transfer of cluster munitions to Ukraine by the United States undermines international efforts to safeguard civilians from indiscriminate weapons. That act is a serious violation of international humanitarian law.

On another note, the excessive arms purchases and military spending by certain countries, particularly in the Middle East, exacerbate regional peace and security challenges. Indeed, in 2022, global military expenditure continued its upward trajectory for the eighth consecutive year, reaching an unprecedented amount.

In conclusion, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, combined with the substantial arsenal of sophisticated offensive conventional weapons in the possession of the Israeli regime, which continues to threaten regional and global peace and security, warrants special attention from, and action by, the international community.

A full version of this statement will be posted to *The Journal of the United Nations*.

**Mr. Tchalaré (Togo)** (*spoke in French*): The Togolese delegation would like to reiterate its congratulations on the smooth conduct of our work and its readiness to cooperate with you, Mr. Chair, and the other members of the Bureau.

My delegation aligns itself with the statement made by the representative of Nigeria on behalf of the Group of African States, as well as the statement made by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/78/PV.18). We would like to make the following remarks in our national capacity.

We would like to express our satisfaction that the issue of small arms and light weapons (SALW) has once again been included on our agenda this year. This is a crucial matter of concern to the whole world, in particular the African continent, which for several decades has been paying the heaviest price regarding the impact of the illicit trade in SALW due to the continuing high number of conflicts taking place there. However, my delegation would like to clearly reiterate that the commitments made regarding conventional arms in general should in no way affect the sovereign

right of any State to acquire them, in line with its security needs.

My delegation would also like to express its support for the initiatives undertaken at all levels in the fight against the illicit trade, transfer, manufacture, possession and circulation of SALW. In that regard, we would like to welcome the general consensus achieved on the final document of the eighth Biennial Meeting of States of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action on Small Arms and the International Tracing Instrument, and we hope that that success represents a lasting return to consensus on the issue.

The Togolese delegation also welcomes another success—that of the much more recent ninth Conference of States Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty, whose work resulted in consensus outcomes. We would therefore like to reiterate the importance of implementing the Arms Trade Treaty, which provides a balanced and objective response to the challenges posed by the illicit trade in conventional weapons, including SALW.

In addition to the initiatives undertaken within the United Nations to control the flow of SALW, considerable efforts are being made at the regional level. These include the African Union's Silencing Arms in Africa by 2030 initiative, which is one of the flagship projects of its Agenda 2063.

We would also like to highlight the significant efforts being made within the Economic Community of West African States in the context of the 2006 Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons, Their Ammunition and Other Related Materials.

In recent years, we have witnessed a deterioration in the security situation in West Africa and the Sahel, particularly given the increasing number and severity of terrorist attacks, which, initially confined to the Sahel region, have ended up affecting the coastal States of the Gulf of Guinea. In such an alarming security context, there is a pressing need to control SALW, which are often used by terrorist groups and other national and transnational criminal organizations operating in that region and elsewhere, and it requires appropriate responses.

Mindful of the need to address the issue, my country set up an institutional and regulatory framework to combat the illicit trade in SALW and, with the help of its partners, is carrying out activities to mark those

weapons and raise public awareness. My delegation would like to take this opportunity to express its gratitude to all Togo's partners, in general, and to the United Nations, in particular, for their valuable support in the context of SALW control-related projects. In that regard, we should recall that Lomé, the capital of Togo, hosts the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa, whose excellent cooperation with the Togolese Government is to be commended. Furthermore, well aware of the scale of the challenge of controlling SALW, my country hosted the first meeting of the Lomé Peace and Security Forum from 20 to 22 October, during which decision-makers, partners and experts from various backgrounds considered, among other things, the issue of such weapons in the current context of political transitions and security threats in Africa. It is therefore by working together and constantly seeking consensus that we will be able to overcome the challenges of SALW control.

My delegation calls for greater international cooperation in the area of SALW. We would like to see a greater focus on equipment supply, capacity-building and technology transfer as part of that cooperation.. We also hope that the fourth United Nations 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 in New York in 2024, provides us with the opportunity to take stock of developments in the Programme's implementation and enable us to strengthen consensus on that issue. Finally, we urge those involved at every stage of the trade in SALW to act in good faith and respect existing commitments in that area in order to significantly reduce the risks of those weapons being diverted to criminal groups, which threaten the security of States and the well-being of their populations.

**Mr. Voionmaa** (Finland): Finland fully aligns itself with the statement made on behalf of the European Union (see A/C.1/78/PV.18). I would like to make the following remarks in my national capacity.

The rules-based international order is under serious duress, including in terms of arms control and disarmament, and it is our most important duty to protect it. We must remain resilient in doing so. In conventional arms control, our commonly created instruments must be fully implemented and jointly upheld. We reiterate our continued support for the Secretary-General's Agenda for Disarmament and New Agenda for Peace.

Let me reaffirm Finland's commitment to the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. We also welcome the work and outcome of the Open-ended Working Group on Conventional Ammunition.

Regarding the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), for its success it is vital to promote national implementation and fulfil its reporting obligations. Universalization is a key priority, and Finland would like to encourage all States to join the Treaty. Finland is a long-standing contributor to enhancing the capacities of our partners, which strive to fulfil their commitments under various instruments. Our total contribution to small arms and light weapons and humanitarian mine-action projects equals approximately €3.8 million every year. In the area of small arms and light weapons, Finland supports the work of the Saving Lives Entity fund, the United Nations Trust Facility Supporting Cooperation on Arms Regulation, the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research and its long-standing work on weapons and ammunition management in Africa, as well as the ATT Trust Fund.

Regarding humanitarian mine action, we seek to address the grave humanitarian consequences of mines and other explosive ordnance. We continue our long-standing support to humanitarian mine projects, currently in Ukraine, Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria and Somalia. The Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention is important. We highlight its full implementation and universalization, and we urge all States to join the Convention.

We need to intensify our dialogue on new and emerging technologies. We welcome new initiatives in that regard. Two positive examples are the Summit on Responsible Artificial Intelligence in the Military Domain, organized by the Netherlands and South Korea, and the United States Political Declaration on Responsible Military Use of Artificial Intelligence and Autonomy. We underline our continued support for the work done so far within the Group of Governmental Experts on Emerging Technologies in the Area of Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems, which is the right forum to continue the discussion on possible prohibitions and regulations on lethal autonomous weapons systems.

Finally, Finland will continue to highlight the importance of the women and peace and security

agenda, gender equality and the full empowerment of women in all circumstances. We need to mainstream that work, including in the arms control sector and in the implementation of its various instruments.

**Mr. Souliyong** (Lao People's Democratic Republic): My delegation aligns itself with the statements made on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/78/PV.18) and to be made on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

The Lao People's Democratic Republic is greatly concerned about the wide range of security and humanitarian impacts arising from the illicit manufacture, transfer and circulation of small arms and light weapons. Therefore, my delegation fully supports the efforts to strengthen the full and effective control of those weapons and to combat their illicit trade at the national, regional and international levels, as they are overtly linked with international peace and security.

In that regard, we welcome the adoption of the final report of the eight Biennial Meeting of States on Small Arms by consensus, and we look forward to the convening of 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 in 2024. We also welcome the adoption of the final report (see A/78/111) of the Open-ended Working Group to elaborate a set of political commitments as a new global framework that will address the existing gaps in through-life ammunition management.

Like other speakers, the Lao People's Democratic Republic shares the common aspiration to make our world free of threats from explosive remnants of war. To that end, we believe that it is essential to universalize and put into practice the pertinent international instruments and treaties, to which the Lao People's Democratic Republic is a party, including the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, with particular importance given to the Convention on Cluster Munitions.

As the world's largest victim of cluster munitions and a State party to the Convention on Cluster Munitions, the Lao People's Democratic Republic is profoundly concerned over the announcement and possible use of cluster munitions. For more than four decades, the Lao people were victimized by cluster munitions, and until today deadly unexploded ordnance continues to harm

and maim innocent people and poses major constraints for social and economic development.

On that note, the Lao People's Democratic Republic calls on any State or actor to refrain from all use, production, transfer and stockpiling of cluster munitions, as prescribed in the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM), so that innocent people will not be victimized by such heinous weaponry. Taking this opportunity, we invite all States that have not yet done so to join the CCM and pursue the goal of a world free of cluster munitions.

The Lao People's Democratic Republic reiterates that mine action is crucial to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and we encourage all efforts to promote mine action at the international and national levels. For our part, the Lao People's Democratic Republic has adopted its national SDG 18, entitled "Lives safe from unexploded ordnance" and the Safe Path Forward 3 strategic plan for the period 2021 to 2030, aimed at addressing unexploded ordnance (UXO)-related challenges, as UXO has undermined our national development efforts. In that connection, we count on the continued support and cooperation of the international community to help the Lao People's Democratic Republic to specifically implement its national SDG 18, together with the other SDGs.

History has demonstrated that conventional weapons, particularly explosive remnants of war, continue to have deadly impacts on innocent people. It is our firm belief that, with our concerted efforts to implement the relevant international legal instruments and frameworks, we can make an important contribution to the maintenance of international peace, reduce humanitarian impacts and ensure a safer environment for the future generations.

**Ms. Gai (Italy):** Italy aligns itself with the statement made on behalf of the European Union (see A/C.1/78/PV.18). I would like to add some remarks in my national capacity.

Italy firmly upholds all international instruments restricting or prohibiting the use of conventional weapons that are not, or cannot be, used in compliance with international humanitarian law. To that end, recalling the damage and suffering caused by unexploded ordnance, we call for the universalization and effective implementation of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Treaty and the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM). Italy is a staunch supporter of

both those legal instruments, being a senior member of the Committee on Victim Assistance of the Ottawa Convention and having recently been nominated as co-coordinator for clearance and risk reduction under the CCM.

We deeply regret the repeated use of these heinous weapons in certain areas of conflict, especially in the context of Russia's unjustified, illegal and unprovoked war of aggression against Ukraine. Civilians continue to represent the vast majority of victims, with a significant impact on children. We need to stop that trend. We therefore reiterate our firm condemnation of the use of anti-personnel mines and cluster munitions by any actor anywhere. In that context, we urge all States to refrain from any transfers of weapons to Russia. We call on Russia to respect international humanitarian law and to immediately and unconditionally withdraw all its troops and military equipment from the entire territory of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders.

In parallel, we share the deep concern of the international community at the increasing use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs), including by non-State actors.

We call for adequate risk-education and victim-assistance efforts to face the impact these hazardous weapons have on civilians and peacekeeping personnel in conflict and post-conflict areas. In this context, we welcome the adoption last year of the Political Declaration on Strengthening the Protection of Civilians from the Humanitarian Consequences Arising from the Use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas. As part of our long-standing commitment, a dedicated trust fund for humanitarian mine clearance was set up in 2001, and since then Italy has devoted almost €80 million to mine action programmes, with our country investing €8.5 million for 2022.

The same constructive engagement inspires Italy's efforts towards an effective implementation of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW). In view of the next meeting of the High Contracting Parties of the CCW, to be held in November in Geneva, we continue to emphasize the value of an inclusive approach in preparing a productive outcome for the meeting, along with the need to adapt the structure and scope of the Convention to normative developments and military weapons technologies.

One key issue is the military use of emerging technologies, particularly artificial intelligence, which



is likely to become a top priority over the next few years, as the Secretary-General himself highlighted in his policy brief entitled *A New Agenda for Peace*. We have welcomed the work of the Group of Governmental Experts on Emerging Technologies in the Area of Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (LAWS) and are co-sponsoring the draft resolution on LAWS submitted by Austria in this session of the First Committee (A/C.1/78/L.56). We believe that a two-tier ban-or-regulate approach is the best way forward. Such an approach recognizes that autonomous weapons systems that cannot comply with international humanitarian law are de facto prohibited, whereas other autonomous weapons systems should be regulated.

We believe in the importance of countering illicit arm transfers and call for the universalization of the Arms Trade Treaty and the full implementation of all its provisions. Italy regards with particular concern the increase in illicit transfers of small arms and light weapons including via the so-called deep web and is constructively engaged in multilateral efforts aimed at curbing the destabilizing accumulation and misuse of small arms and light weapons and of conventional ammunitions. In this regard, and even in the light of the priorities set by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, we promote an inclusive approach so as to harmonize security concerns, gender-sensitive considerations and sustainable development.

**Mr. Ahmed** (Pakistan): The tenth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD-I) provided a robust road map for the limitation and gradual reduction of armed forces and conventional weapons within the framework of general and complete disarmament. States with the largest military arsenals have a special responsibility in pursuing the process of conventional armaments reductions. Regrettably, this agreed vision has not been realized. Instead, we find ourselves amid a persistent increase in global military expenditures.

According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, last year saw a 3.7 per cent increase in world military spending to reach a new high. Astoundingly, the entire budget of the United Nations comprises less than 1 per cent of the world's military spending. This disparity is staggering, revealing a reality where a disproportionate 150 times more funds are being allocated to fuelling conflicts than to preventing them.

Moreover, attempts to regulate conventional weapons, as seen in such initiatives as the Arms Trade Treaty, have only seen partial success. Despite the Treaty's call on States parties to evaluate arms transfers based on human rights, legal, and peace and security criteria, we have observed an unyielding flow of advanced armaments into volatile regions with festering disputes. We are left to wonder: what value do criteria for arms transfers hold when their application remains subject to political and strategic considerations? Waivers and exemptions are granted with alarming frequency, often undermining the pursuit of peace and stability in various regions.

Many of these worrisome trends are amplified in South Asia, where one State is being supplied with advanced weapons and technologies despite its destabilizing policies in the neighbourhood and beyond, its aggressive posturing and rhetoric, and its complete defiance of Security Council resolutions. For its part, Pakistan is committed to the establishment of a strategic restraint regime in South Asia, which includes an element of conventional force balance. Pakistan neither wants, nor is engaged in, an arms race in the region.

There are three major factors impeding progress in addressing adverse impacts of conventional weapons: first, the pursuit of a partial approach — for example, attempts to separate motivations for arms production from the controls of their trade and transfer; secondly, an exclusive focus on managing the effects of trade in arms without adequately addressing the causes that propel such a trade in the first place; and thirdly, lack of faithful implementation of existing international, regional or national commitments and obligations. Only by addressing these impediments will we be able to progressively pursue the vision that was laid down in SSOD-I.

For over three decades, the First Committee has adopted Pakistan's resolution on promotion of conventional arms control at the regional and subregional levels. This resolution is anchored in the core SSOD-I principles of undiminished security of all States and balanced reduction of forces and of conventional armaments. We look forward to the adoption of this year's draft resolution (A/C.1/78/L.27) with the widest possible support.

As a party to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) and its five protocols,

Pakistan remains fully compliant with their provisions. The success of the CCW lies in the delicate balance that it seeks to maintain between humanitarian considerations and the legitimate security interests of States.

The ongoing work on lethal autonomous weapon systems (LAWS) within the ambit of the CCW should continue with an aim to developing international rules through a new protocol. Such a protocol would need to clearly spell out prohibitions and regulations governing autonomous weapons systems so as to ensure compliance with international humanitarian law as well as consistency with the objectives and purposes of the CCW. In this context, we would like to draw attention to a proposal submitted by Pakistan within the context of the CCW on an international legal instrument on LAWS.

Without prejudice to the discussions in the CCW that pivot on international humanitarian law, there are other aspects of use of artificial intelligence in military capabilities and autonomous weapon systems that need to be addressed. We will be sharing our views on this during the First Committee debate on the next cluster.

**Mr. Gurbanov** (Azerbaijan): The excessive stockpiling and illicit proliferation of conventional weapons poses a serious threat to regional security and the safety of civilians. Conventional arms control regimes are important instruments for combating this problem and for establishing mutual trust, predictability and transparency in the military sphere. These efforts also require scrupulous implementation of and adherence to global and regional commitments under such regimes, which can also contribute to peace, security and sustainable development.

Unfortunately, the recent developments in the South Caucasus region revealed the dire condition of its regional arms control commitments. The presence of remnants of the armed forces of Armenia and their illegal armed formations in and, until recently, non-withdrawal from the Garabagh region of Azerbaijan was a serious threat to the security environment of our region. Even after the signing of the trilateral statement of 10 November 2020, Armenia, by misusing Azerbaijan's Lachin road, continued to provide military, financial and logistical support to forces composed of more than 10,000 armed personnel, which were well equipped with conventional weapons, as well as to transfer and plant additional landmines and extend its military build-up in the Garabagh region.

In the light of Armenia's periodic and intensified military provocations against Azerbaijan's territorial integrity, on 19 and 20 September, Azerbaijan carried out local counter-terrorism measures to disarm, disband and bring about the withdrawal of the remnants of Armenia's forces in the Garabagh region. During the disarmament process, the Azerbaijani army also revealed that Armenia's armed forces used civilian infrastructure facilities as depots for ammunition and landmines, and ambulance vehicles for their transportation. It was also discovered that before the Armenian withdrawal many improvised explosive devices and booby traps were installed in buildings and on bridges in the Garabagh region, leaving no doubt that Armenia aimed to inflict as many casualties as possible. That is how Armenia camouflaged its illegal military activities and the illicit transfer and accumulation of weapons and ammunition in the Garabagh region, in a blatant breach of obligations under the relevant arms- and export-control regimes and contrary to its commitments under the United Nations Charter.

All of the foregoing proves that, over the years, the information Armenia has provided about its armed forces in the annual exchange of military information under the 2011 Vienna Document and the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms is inaccurate and incomplete. It also proves that Armenia acted in violation of the fundamental principles of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe, including the obligations to refrain from the use of force against the territorial integrity of any State and to obtain host-country consent, for which the Treaty provides that no State party will station conventional armed forces on the territory of another State Party without the agreement of that State party.

In the context of the illicit use of conventional weapons, the easy availability of such weapons in society and their acquisition, possession and use by children and youth is another matter of concern. Unfortunately, even in the post-conflict period, Armenia's military-affiliated organizations continued the old practice of training children in military camps for a new war or for committing acts of terror against Azerbaijan.

Armenia's mine terror, which started during its military occupation of our territories and continued even after the signing of the trilateral statement has made Azerbaijan one of the most landmine- and explosive-remnants-of-war-contaminated countries in the world. Since 1991, more than 3,400 Azerbaijani

citizens — and 333 since November 2020 — became victims of mine explosions. A complex mine threat impedes ongoing development and reconstruction efforts in the territories of Azerbaijan that have been liberated from Armenian occupation as well as the safe return to their homes of the hundreds of thousands of internally displaced persons.

The uncontrolled flows of conventional weapons that create an environment of insecurity also impedes the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set forth under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Indeed, there is a direct relationship between disarmament, human security and wider socioeconomic development. In this regard, Azerbaijan's current humanitarian mine-action activities also aim to serve as a driver of progress in achieving the SDGs, which is why humanitarian mine clearance has been officially declared as the eighteenth national SDG in Azerbaijan.

We believe that building trust among States Members of the United Nations in the military sphere is possible only through the strict observance of the fundamental norms and principles of international law, particularly those relating to respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States.

**Ms. Svadjian (Canada):** Canada wishes to underscore the role played by conventional weapons, as they represent the vast majority of arms employed in armed conflict. The proliferation and unlawful use of these weapons can fuel, intensify and prolong conflict; exacerbate regional instability; perpetuate crime, terrorism and violent extremism; contribute to violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law, including gender-based violence; place vulnerable communities and civilians — particularly women and girls — in harm's way; and hinder post-conflict reconstruction, recovery and development. Conflict and instability are fuelled in large part by the wide availability of such arms. Governments can and should work together to do more to address the illicit transfer, possession and proliferation of conventional weapons.

Canada is proud to work with other States Members of the United Nations, international organizations, civil society and the broader international community to address the proliferation of certain conventional weapons. These efforts must be guided by the perspectives and involvement of all persons, particularly

women and girls. History has shown us that the meaningful integration of intersectional considerations can have positive, lasting impacts on non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament initiatives.

Conventional weapons disproportionately affect civilian populations. It is therefore critical that we universalize and fully implement the agreed-upon international norms and frameworks to regulate the use and transfer of these weapons. Pursuant to international humanitarian law, weapons systems that, by their nature, are either indiscriminate or cause superfluous injury or unnecessary suffering are prohibited. These weapons systems have severe, multifaceted and lasting impacts on civilians and their communities, both during and after conflict.

*(spoke in French)*

Canada is proud of its long history of action to help eradicate landmines, cluster munitions and other explosive remnants of war. While the international community has made remarkable progress in these areas, there is still much work to be done. In addition to legacy contamination in many regions around the world and in ongoing conflicts, Russia's full-scale war of aggression against Ukraine has led to a sharp increase in contamination, which has put far too many civilians and communities at risk.

We urge all States to renew their strong support for the objectives of the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction and the Convention on Cluster Munitions, and we call on all States that have not yet done so to accede to these treaties. We must stand firm in our commitment to a world free of landmines and cluster munitions.

Canada is an active member of the Arms Trade Treaty, which represents a growing and essential international norm. As we approach the tenth anniversary of its drafting, the Treaty is at a critical juncture where we must take the necessary steps to ensure its sustainability, which is key to achieving our common objectives of reducing human suffering and contributing to lasting peace, security and stability. To this end, Canada remains optimistic about the one-year trial programme of work as a stepping stone for increasing the Treaty's effectiveness. Canada strongly supports the promotion of the gender-sensitive

provisions of the Treaty and encourages a broader and more comprehensive discussion of these issues.

Canada will engage in the Group of Governmental Experts on lethal autonomous weapons systems under the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons. We will work with our partners to ensure that the Group builds on the discussions that have been ongoing for almost ten years. Canada also reaffirms that all weapons used in armed conflict must comply with international humanitarian law.

**Mr. Bin Shafi** (Saudi Arabia) (*spoke in Arabic*): The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia deplores in the strongest possible terms the heinous crime of the Israeli occupation forces' shelling of the Al-Ahli Al-Ma'madani Hospital in Gaza, which left hundreds of civilians dead. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia categorically condemns this brutal aggression, which flagrantly violates international law, including international humanitarian law. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia calls for an immediate ceasefire and for humanitarian assistance to be allowed into the area and rejects the forced displacement of the Palestinian people.

My delegation aligns itself with the statements delivered by the representatives of Indonesia and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and the Group of Arab States, respectively (see A/C.1/78/PV.17). I would also like to make the following points in my national capacity.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia welcomes the effective uniform international standards designed to regulate the trade, including the illicit trade, in conventional weapons. These standards should not restrict the ability of States to obtain weapons for defensive purposes, in particular in preserving their national security and resources.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has taken effective steps to prohibit the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. The Kingdom joined the Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition. It has also adopted the latest technologies to monitor State- and private-held weapons in order to ensure that they do not fall into the hands of criminal and terrorist groups.

The Kingdom's specialized entities coordinate among one other to manage all issues related to small arms, light weapons and conventional ammunition.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia wishes to highlight the link between tracing and controlling small arms and light weapons and conventional ammunition, given existing conventions and treaties that seek to prevent both from falling into the wrong hands. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia underscores what it stated during the fourth session of the Open-ended Working Group on Conventional Ammunition: managing conventional ammunition is an issue linked to national security and must be handled only by States in accordance with the principle of sovereignty.

We welcome any international initiative that addresses the issue of surplus conventional ammunition stockpiles as long as such initiatives provide for voluntary adherence. We will interpret any such international initiative in accordance with our national regulations and State sovereignty.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is committed to implementing Security Council resolutions that prohibit the export of weapons to conflict areas. The competent authorities issue strict directives that ensure the full implementation of Security Council resolutions and establish lists of individuals cited by the Security Council as proscribed from carrying arms.

In conclusion, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia attaches importance to delinking international arms conventions and treaties, especially when they have not been adopted by consensus, for example, the Arms Trade Treaty, and opposes the attempt to include such conventions and treaties in documents and decisions of the First Committee. Furthermore, the Kingdom opposes including non-consensual issues unrelated to disarmament in documents issued by the First Committee.

**Mr. Mahmud** (Nigeria): My delegation aligns itself with the statements made by the representatives of Indonesia and Nigeria on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and the Group of African States (see A/C.1/78/PV.17), respectively, and wishes to make the following remarks in its national capacity.

The catastrophic consequences of uncontrolled access to conventional weapons, including small arms and light weapons, are being witnessed around the globe today. From Africa to the Middle East, across Europe to the Americas and Asia, unregulated access to weapons has helped bring death and injury at the hands of terrorists and other criminal elements to millions of innocent people.



Nigeria has experienced the painful consequences of the illicit trade, transfer and circulation of small arms and light weapons by criminal gangs, terrorists and armed bandits. Nigeria is therefore most worried about the influx of illicit small arms and light weapons into the hands of bandits and militias. It calls on all States, especially major producing States, to ensure that the supply of small arms and light weapons is restricted to Governments or entities duly authorized by them. Nigeria is also painfully aware that only multilateral action can help address this problem.

As the first African country to sign and ratify the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), 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. It also supported the adoption of the landmark resolution on the ATT (General Assembly resolution 67/234B) and welcomes the successful outcome of the ninth Conference of States Parties to the Treaty, which took place from 21 to 25 August 2023 in Geneva, Switzerland. My delegation urges States Parties to implement it in a balanced and objective manner.

My delegation underscores the need to present a common front to robustly respond to the threat posed to international peace and security by the non-regulation of conventional weapons. In order to mitigate the proliferation of these weapons, Nigeria has redoubled its efforts to strengthen its national borders, while bolstering cooperation across the West African subregion and beyond.

Our commitment is further demonstrated by the signing and ratification of relevant international, regional and subregional instruments as well as establishing and sustaining robust partnerships with the African Union (AU), the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa and other relevant entities. In addition, the Federal Government of Nigeria has set up a National Centre for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons. The Centre is involved in activities geared towards stemming the tide of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons.

Nigeria has organized capacity-building programmes for security agencies and carried out an initial baseline assessment of the small arms and light weapons situation in the country, including, inter alia, a comprehensive national survey on small arms and light weapons, a comprehensive national weapons-

marking programme, the establishment of database on small arms and light weapons, and a review of our firearms law. We have also established a framework for collaboration with civil society organizations to sustain wider stakeholder participation.

Nigeria continues to support and advance the cause of such regional and subregional initiatives as the 2000 Bamako Declaration, the AU Constitutive Act, the 2002 Protocol on the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council of the AU and the Declaration on a Common African Defence and Security Policy, adopted in Sirte in 2004. In this regard, my delegation wishes to reiterate its support for the establishment of a United Nations fellowship programme on small arms and light weapons for developing countries to train relevant officials nominated by their respective Governments in areas related to the implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action. We also call on all member States to expedite action on the implementation of the United Nations fellowship programme.

**Ms. Storsve** (United States of America): Responsible State use of conventional weapons contributes to global and regional stability. We, the international community, must cooperate to reduce risks posed by illicitly traded small arms and light weapons, including man-portable air defence systems (MANPADS), and related ammunition.

MANPADS remain a significant threat to civil and military aviation. We continue to work with Ukraine and other partners around the world to deter illicit diversion and use of MANPADS, including through training programmes for aviation and border security, destruction of excess State-held stocks through United States-funded destruction programmes, and assisting with the mitigation of MANPADS threats on borders and near critical civilian aviation sites. Russia's ongoing illegal invasion of Ukraine has increased the risk of illicit diversion of these advanced systems.

In close coordination with allies and partners, the United States developed a comprehensive action plan to support Ukraine's efforts to secure advanced conventional weapons and prevent their diversion. We are confident Ukraine is putting United States security assistance to good use and is dedicated to keeping equipment accountable. To date, we have seen no credible evidence of illicit diversion of security assistance by Ukraine.

We must also strive to reduce the risks created by ammunition diverted into the hands of unauthorized recipients, such as terrorist groups and criminal organizations. To this end, the United States actively and constructively participated in the Open-ended Working Group on Conventional Ammunition and endorsed its final report and recommendation to establish the Global Framework for Through-life Conventional Ammunition Management. We welcome the report's adoption without a vote, and we were disappointed that Russia and Belarus disassociated themselves from it and broke consensus on the Global Framework. The United States supports the proposed draft resolution on conventional ammunition (A/C.1/78/L.41), and we look forward to the establishment of the Global Framework and its implementation and review process.

The United States also welcomes the continued work of the Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) on emerging technologies in the area of lethal autonomous weapons systems (LAWS) within the framework of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW). The LAWS GGE is a uniquely appropriate forum for multilateral discussions on LAWS because it benefits from contributions by diplomatic, military, legal, technical and policy experts, as well as civil society. This expertise has resulted in a significant body of work and continues to provide the best opportunity to advance international efforts on LAWS. We recognize the contribution a balanced and inclusive report of the Secretary-General on LAWS could make to the LAWS GGE's work, and we plan to support the draft resolution submitted by Austria (A/C.1/78/L.56). We look forward to the November meeting of High Contracting Parties to the CCW, where they will discuss the GGE's 2024 mandate. We support a mandate to develop measures strengthening the implementation of existing principles of international humanitarian law in relation to the use of LAWS.

While we continue to support these crucial discussions, we also see a need to address the broader implications of artificial intelligence in the military domain. We are therefore encouraging countries to join us in the Political Declaration on Responsible Military Use of Artificial Intelligence and Autonomy. When used lawfully and responsibly, advanced technologies such as autonomy and artificial intelligence can improve the protection of civilians in armed conflict.

The United States reaffirms and recognizes the equal, full and effective participation of women at all levels of decision-making processes, such as those

I have mentioned, as such participation is one of the essential factors in promoting and attaining sustainable peace and security.

Turning to further recent steps the United States has taken to promote security in relation to this thematic cluster, last February, the United States announced a revised conventional arms transfer policy, which provides the framework under which the United States Government reviews and evaluates proposed arms transfers using a more holistic approach. All proposed defence sales are assessed on their individual merits and on a case-by-case basis, taking into account multiple factors to determine if a potential arms transfer is in our national interest and factoring in considerations of human rights, international humanitarian law and security sector governance.

In conclusion, I would like to highlight the fact that the United States remains the world's single largest financial supporter of conventional weapons destruction. Since 1993, we have invested over \$4.6 billion in over 120 countries to safely landmines and explosives and to secure and dispose of excess small arms and light weapons and munitions. In Ukraine, since January 2022, the United States has committed \$182 million to mine-clearance assistance. This support plays a critical role in making it possible for Ukrainian civilians — and civilians around the world — to safely begin to rebuild their lives.

**Mr. Parihar (India):** India reaffirms its collective commitment to disarmament and arms control instruments, including those on conventional weapons. India is fully committed to the humanitarian principles enshrined in the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) and is a party to that Convention's five protocols. We strongly believe that the universalization of the CCW is critical for its full and effective implementation.

Amended Protocol II strikes a balance between humanitarian concerns arising from landmines and legitimate defence requirements, particularly for States with long borders. India has fulfilled its obligations under Amended Protocol II relating, inter alia, to the non-production of non-detectable mines and to rendering all anti-personnel mines detectable. Amended Protocol II also serves as an appropriate framework for addressing the issue of improvised explosive devices (IEDs), which are, as we all know, often deployed by non-State actors, including terrorists and illegal armed

groups. In this regard, India welcomes the adoption of the Declaration on Improvised Explosive Devices at the sixth CCW Review Conference. India accords high priority to IED-threat mitigation and victim assistance. India is a leading contributor to United Nations peacekeeping operations and has extended assistance to international mine-clearance and rehabilitation efforts.

As an original signatory to Protocol V, India is deeply aware of the grave humanitarian concerns caused by the explosive remnants of war. Our ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities underscores the importance we attach to victim assistance. The India for Humanity Initiative, launched as part of the celebration of the 150th anniversary of the birth of Mahatma Gandhi has organized limb fitment camps, with over 6,500 artificial limbs fitted in various countries in the last few years. The prosthetic limb popularly known as the Jaipur Foot has gained recognition worldwide for its efficacy, safety and cost effectiveness.

India believes that issues related to lethal autonomous weapons systems (LAWS) must be discussed within the framework of the CCW, which provides a platform to review and meaningfully respond to evolving new technologies applicable to armed conflict in the twenty-first century. We believe that a shared understanding of the fundamental concepts, including definitions and the characterization of LAWS, needs to be developed.

India welcomes the consensus outcome document of the eighth Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action on Small Arms, which recognizes the adverse effect of the illicit armed trade in exacerbating terrorism. We are also pleased that Group of Governmental Experts on the United Nations Register on Conventional Arms, chaired by India, adopted a consensus report last year. The Group recommended the adoption of a description for small arms and light weapons to be reported upon under the 7+1 formula, and it reflected on the advances made in technology to ensure that the seven categories of the Register continue to capture all relevant conventional weapons. In addition, the Group reached consensus on recommending the adjustment of the scope of Category V, including rotary-wing unarmed combat vehicles. We are pleased to note that this year the Register achieved the highest level of reporting since 2012.

India has been an active contributor in the discussions of the Open-ended Working Group on

Conventional Ammunition. We are pleased to note that the Working Group was able to adopt its report on a global framework for a safe, security and sustainable through-life conventional ammunition management without a vote. India is pleased to be a member of the Technical Review Board to update the International Ammunition Technical Guidelines and has actively contributed to efforts aimed at further refining the Guidelines.

As a member of the Wassenaar Agreement and its plenary chair for the year 2023, India remains committed to working toward further strengthening the global non-proliferation architecture in the area of conventional weapons and related dual-use goods and technologies.

In conclusion, India looks forward to working with all States members to address the risk posed by conventional weapons.

**Mr. Christoglou (Greece):** Greece fully aligns itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union (see A/C.1/78/PV.18). We would also like to make some additional remarks in our national capacity.

Greece believes that the use and incorporation into weapon systems of such emerging technologies as artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning poses serious political, legal, moral and ethical concerns. From a political point of view, the development and use of lethal autonomous weapons systems (LAWS) may lower the threshold of consideration pertaining to engagement in armed conflicts.

Moreover, as we have stressed in the past, it is dubious that fully autonomous weapon systems comport with the cardinal principles of international humanitarian law and its provisions. In particular, it is doubtful whether the current technological capabilities allow for the prior insertion of parameters into autonomous weapon systems that can ensure their compliance with sophisticated legal and evaluative concepts, such as the principles of target discrimination and proportionality. Additionally, an issue of paramount concern for my country is the hypothetical scenario of the use of AI to employ and/or initiate and terminate the deployment of a nuclear weapon. Greece supports the two-tier approach expressed by many countries in the deliberations of the Group of Governmental Experts on Emerging Technologies in the Area of Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems in Geneva and would

like to underscore that it does not intend to develop or acquire a weapons system on which it will not exercise effective human control.

In the light of the foregoing, we would like to reiterate that Greece strongly believes that the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons remains the appropriate forum for continuing to discuss the prohibitions of and restrictions on the use of conventional weapons, including LAWS, as the Convention's inclusive nature ensures the necessary balance between humanitarian concerns and military necessity.

The legally binding nature of the Arms Trade Treaty, a global achievement, could be seen as a way, through charting the course of the legal trade of conventional weapons, to curtail the illicit trade thereof. Since its adoption in 2013, the Treaty has established common international norms for the trade and transfer of conventional weapons. We call on all States to ratify or accede to the Treaty without further delay and on the parties to comply with their obligations, including in reporting. We commend the successful outcome of the ninth Conference of States Parties to the ATT under the presidency of the Republic of Korea, and we welcome the assumption of the next presidency by Romania.

The politically binding United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All its Aspects has steadily taken concrete steps in battling the scourge of the illicit trade of small arms and light weapons. From the outset, Greece has been a supporter of the Programme of Action and is looking ahead towards the upcoming its fourth Review Conference.

Moreover, my country welcomes other positive developments, such as the successful outcome of the eighth Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action and the adoption of the final report of the Open-ended Working Group on Conventional Ammunition.

In conclusion, Greece remains at the front line of multilateral efforts aimed at promoting non-proliferation and arms control in the area of conventional weapons.

**Mr. Shen Jian (China)** (*spoke in Chinese*): The excessive accumulation, misuse and irresponsible transfer of conventional weapons aggravates regional tensions, increases the risk of an arms race and triggers serious humanitarian crises. At the same time, the

development and military application of emerging technologies is also creating new security challenges.

As a permanent member of the Security Council and a State party to such international legal instruments as the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) and the Arms Trade Treaty, China has consistently and strictly complied with its international obligations and is committed to advancing various United Nations agendas, including on small arms and light weapons, conventional ammunition, and transparency in armaments.

Currently, the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, China's legislature, is reviewing proposals to ratify the Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, their Parts and Components and Ammunition, which represents an important step towards implementing the Global Security Initiative and safeguarding international and regional peace and stability. China will work with all sides to further enhance cooperation on controlling small arms and light weapons and take concrete actions to address the global security deficit.

The Chinese Government has always taken a prudent and responsible approach to the arms trade by establishing and continuing to improve its regime for controlling the export of military products in strict accordance with the following three principles: first, contributing to the legitimate self-defence capability of recipient countries; secondly, not undermining peace, security and stability of the region concerned and the world at large; and, thirdly, non-interference in the internal affairs of recipient countries.

China welcomes the Group of Governmental Experts' useful recommendations on improving the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms. China attaches great importance to combating the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and has scrupulously implemented the provisions of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and the International Tracing Instrument. To date, China has provided over ¥200 million in humanitarian mine-clearance assistance to more than 40 countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America and trained over a thousand mine-clearance personnel. China stands ready to conduct active international cooperation in this field to the best of its ability.



China welcomes the 11 guiding principles on lethal autonomous weapon systems agreed by the CCW Group of Governmental Experts. We support negotiating a legally binding international instrument to prohibit fully autonomous lethal weapons systems if conditions are ripe and when all parties have reached consensus on such issues as definition and characterization. In the meantime, China encourages countries to follow the guiding principles in the light of their national circumstances and direct and regulate the development of relevant technologies within the framework of existing national laws and military management systems.

China champions a vision of common comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security to address regional instabilities and humanitarian concerns arising from conventional weapons. Accordingly, China wishes to propose the following.

First, importance should be given to addressing root causes. China backs all efforts conducive to the peaceful settlement of crises. Both development and security should be ensured to achieve economic growth and social stability and to eliminate the root causes of wars, conflicts, terrorism and organized crime, with a view to creating conditions for advancing conventional arms control and resolving humanitarian crises caused by the proliferation of weapons.

Secondly, States must assume more responsibilities. States should fulfil their primary responsibilities as States in the management, research, use and transfer of conventional weapons by crafting and improving relevant laws and regulations and strengthening law enforcement. Major arms-exporting countries should take the lead by adopting responsible arms-export policies, desist from interfering in other countries' internal affairs, refrain from adding fuel to the fire in conflict regions, avoid transferring weapons to non-State actors and prevent illicit weapon diversion.

Thirdly, to uphold multilateralism, the international community should support the CCW, *inter alia*, as the main forum for conventional arms control, take a balanced approach to legitimate military and security needs and humanitarian concerns, properly respond to the security challenges posed by emerging technologies, seek the highest common denominator, continue to strengthen the authority and effectiveness of relevant mechanisms, and ensure broad participation and strict compliance by major military Powers.

Fourthly, to deepen international cooperation, States should enhance information exchange and experience-sharing on policy and law enforcement, actively promote bilateral and multilateral practical cooperation in order to deliver security dividends for all and facilitate the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Developed countries should provide greater support in terms of financial assistance, technology transfer, institutional development and personnel training.

Our full statement will be submitted to the Secretariat for posting on the e-deleGATE platform.

**Mr. Andersen (Norway):** In a time of rearmament and rising global tensions, building trust and ensuring adherence to commonly agreed norms and rules is more urgent than ever. Established norms are being severely challenged. We must act to preserve and strengthen existing legal instruments that prohibit and regulate the use of those conventional weapons that cause the most humanitarian harm.

Norway welcomes the Secretary-General's effort to raise concern about small arms and light weapons in his policy brief entitled *A New Agenda for Peace*. Small arms and light weapons and their ammunition are the leading cause of violent deaths globally.

When explosive weapons are used indiscriminately, as has been seen in Russia's illegal and unprovoked war in Ukraine, the negative effects are long lasting and sometimes irreversible. It is reported that civilians account for almost 90 per cent of casualties when explosive weapons are used in populated areas. The harrowing images from ongoing conflicts are stark reminders that civilians suffer the most in urban warfare. We expect all parties to uphold their obligations to protect civilians from the harm of explosives. Civilians must never be targets.

The endorsement last year by 83 States of the Political Declaration on Strengthening the Protection of Civilians from the Humanitarian Consequences Arising from the Use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas (EWIPA) was an important milestone. The Political Declaration aims to strengthen efforts to protect civilians by having States declare their commitment to assessing, updating and improving military policies and practices. Norway is looking forward to hosting next year's follow-up conference on EWIPA in Oslo. We strongly encourage States that have yet done so to endorse the Declaration.

The Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction and the Convention on Cluster Munitions are cornerstones of the humanitarian disarmament architecture. These treaties have been enormously successful as examples of how disarmament diplomacy can reduce human suffering. Both have fostered innovative partnerships between States, mine-action operators and organizations. However, we are deeply concerned by the reported increase in casualties from the use of cluster munitions. There is an urgent need to ensure universal adherence to these Conventions.

Funding gaps remain a major challenge in mine clearance. To achieve the ambitious goal of a mine-free world we must step up our efforts and ensure a sufficient level of funding for mine action in affected States.

Autonomous technology and artificial intelligence are developing at an exponential speed. The use of such technologies for military purposes poses serious legal, humanitarian and military concerns. We must ensure that weapons systems featuring autonomy remain under meaningful human control. We now have a window of opportunity to address these challenges by clarifying and elaborating norms and rules before the technology fully matures. The rapid changes require us to accelerate progress.

The consensus report, approved by the Group of Governmental Experts on Emerging Technologies in the Area of Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (LAWS) this year, was a welcome development. Norway supports the two-tier approach as a good basis for further progress. We welcome the efforts by Austria in submitting a draft resolution on LAWS (A/C.1/78/L.56), which Norway has co-sponsored.

Norway is a dedicated supporter of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT). In many regions, the illicit trade and diversion of arms poses a direct threat to civilian populations. The ATT is the most robust framework we possess to counter these illicit activities. Building capacity, sharing best practices and institutionalizing cross-border cooperation between relevant institutions should be one of the Treaty's main objectives. We welcome the establishment of the Diversion Information Exchange Forum. We call on our fellow member States to join the ATT as a matter of priority.

Disarmament cannot be an endeavour of States alone. Civil society, international organizations and

academia play a significant role in moving us forward. The multi-stakeholder approach has been fundamental in so many processes. We must also strive to achieve gender balance and integrate diversity perspectives in disarmament forums and work.

**Mr. Sharoni (Israel):** During the past weeks, Israel has been the target of a brutal and barbarous attack that claimed the lives of more than 1,700 men, women and children. These events have clearly demonstrated the immense damage that the proliferation of conventional weapons can cause.

Regrettably, conventional weapons have been acquired and proliferated throughout the Middle East in unprecedented quantities. These weapons find their way into the hands of oppressive regimes, terrorist organizations and terror-sponsoring States.

The implementation of normative instruments, such as the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and its International Tracing Instrument and the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW), is of great importance if we wish to achieve the goal of a safer world. In this regard, Israel delivered its annual report to the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms and its annual military expenditure report and biannual report to the United Nations Programme of Action. In addition, Israel joined the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction as an observer and extended its moratorium on all exports, sales or other transfers of all anti-personnel landmines for an additional period of three years, until July 2026.

As a High Contracting Party to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW), Israel also delivered its national compliance report and its report on Additional Protocol II to the CCW.

Israel acknowledges the significance of the Arms Trade Treaty as a milestone in the international community's pledge to enhance efforts to curb the illicit transfers of arms. As a signatory State, Israel supports the goals and purposes of this Treaty, and many of its principles and standards are already embodied in Israel's robust export-control mechanisms.

Israel values the CCW and recognizes its uniqueness as the main forum, in which all the most relevant actors participate. As a result, the CCW's achievements have

been among those with the greatest practical effect on the ground.

With regard to lethal autonomous weapons systems (LAWS), the progress that has been made this year in the discussions within the CCW should be highlighted, while also noting the need for further work in the Group of Governmental Experts to bring about tangible consensual outcomes. The concrete results of our discussions reaffirm our belief that the CCW remains the most suitable forum for addressing the challenges and opportunities presented by emerging technologies related to LAWS. For this reason, Israel believes it is important to continue our discussions within the CCW in a substantive and meaningful way, focusing on informed discussions that allow us to further mutual understanding and continue to examine the aspects that have been raised so far.

Considering the ongoing evolution of technology, it is important to recognize that our understanding and expectations of emerging technologies in the area of lethal autonomous weapon systems can change over time. Our discussions must therefore be approached in a cautious and measured manner.

In the past two weeks, Israel has suffered an unprecedented attack of unimaginable magnitude. The diversion of missiles, rockets, unmanned aerial vehicles, small arms and light weapons and related technologies into the hands of Hamas and other terrorist organizations has led to the loss of more than 1,700 lives. The proliferation of these types of conventional weapons to Hamas, the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham, the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, Hizbullah and other terrorist groups is not only a growing challenge in the Middle East, but also a global threat. The international community must find a way to combat this dangerous trend. If we do not act together now the results will be nothing short of disastrous for all of us.

**Mr. Soares Damico (Brazil):** Although weapons of mass destruction pose an existential threat in a scenario dominated by strategic competition and conflict, large swathes of humankind continue, sadly, to be affected daily by violence caused by the use of conventional weapons, particularly small weapons. Indeed, organized criminal groups, gangs, terrorists and violent extremists endanger lives and livelihoods of people around the planet, particularly vulnerable populations. That is why the Sustainable Development Goals, recently reaffirmed by the General Assembly in

resolution 78/1, considers among its priorities cutting violent death rates in half. Most of those violent deaths, even outside armed conflicts, are inflicted by small arms and light weapons and, of course, ammunition. It is therefore essential to combat their proliferation, diversion and misuse and strengthen the implementation of the existing normative frameworks.

Brazil believes that the implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) will greatly benefit from the recent breakthrough seen in the adoption, in June 2023, of the Global Framework for Through-life Conventional Ammunition Management. The Global Framework's guidelines, together with the report of the 2021 Group of Governmental Experts, provide a strong contribution to States' efforts aimed at ensuring the safety and security of conventional ammunitions and at preventing diversion. In this regard, Brazil upholds the adoption of minimal standards for ammunition marking and tracing. Moreover, as the Global Framework takes into account the different circumstances of States, its impact will be positive in international peace and security, particularly in regions subject to destabilization by the diversion and illegal trafficking of conventional arms and ammunition.

The ninth Conference of States Parties to the ATT, under the able presidency of the Republic of Korea, highlighted the importance of the active involvement of the private sector as an indispensable ally in combating firearms diversion. The participation of multiple stakeholders becomes more pressing as criminal networks expand their reach and audacity in finding new routes and markets.

In his recommendations in the policy brief entitled *A New Agenda for Peace*, the Secretary-General stressed the need to achieve the universality of treaties banning inhumane and indiscriminate weapons. The Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) and its Protocols, and the Anti-Personnel Landmines Convention (Ottawa Convention) have been making an enormous contribution to mitigating humanitarian suffering, saving lives and preserving human dignity. These Conventions are essential in consolidating the notion that certain methods and means of warfare are incompatible with international humanitarian law. As one of the first States to sign and ratify the Ottawa Convention, Brazil has been a firm supporter since the Convention's inception. Since 1994, over 370 officers from the Brazilian Armed Forces have participated in mine-clearance operations in South and Central

America and Africa, under the auspices of the United Nations and the Organization of American States.

Despite the foregoing, we must acknowledge that, although progress towards the universalization of the Ottawa Convention has been steady, we are very far from seeing those weapons banned. It is with sadness that we witness their broad use in battlefields, which suggests the limitations of the humanitarian conventions. We say this not to minimize their unequivocal contribution, but to draw lessons for the development of future instruments.

In the CCW, the most important effort is being carried out in the Group of Governmental Experts on Emerging Technologies in the Area of Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (GGE LAWS) to deal with some of the impacts of artificial intelligence and military applications. Brazil had the honour of chairing the Group over the last two years. Proposals submitted by members facilitated substantive discussions, and progress on the progressive development of international humanitarian law, international law and ethical perspectives was achieved. During the upcoming session of the CCW, in November, a new mandate for the Group of Governmental Experts will be decided. It is important that the rhythm of progress be accelerated to account for the time lost during the pandemic.

As in every negotiating exercise on new weapons systems, there is a risk that technological development outpaces diplomatic efforts. Moreover, while delegations are not moving with the same speed, they are, at least, moving in the same direction, even if differences of perception remain as to the final destination. As consensus was achieved in the two-tier approach in the GGE LAWS, unity of purpose exists within the international community. Yet inclusiveness in negotiating an arms control *cum* humanitarian instrument is the other side of the coin of universalization. In brief, will we lose more time by negotiating a single instrument or by seeking to universalize one? There are no perfect solutions in life; we are simply forced to contend with very difficult trade-offs.

**Mr. Luemba** (Angola): I thank you, Mr. Chair, for the opportunity to take the floor with respect to agenda item 99 (m), "Implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction".

Twenty-six years ago, the international community came together to adopt the 1997 Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction (Ottawa Convention) and took action to address and prevent their long-lasting effects.

Today it is estimated that mines kill or maim 5,000 people annually throughout the world, causing an estimated 15,000 to 20,000 injuries each year. Therefore, it is our collective responsibility to remove the mines that remain in the ground to relieve the suffering of victims and their families. Despite existing global initiatives and relevant international instruments, the condemnation of the use of mines and the consistent international appeals to put an end to their production, this type of highly lethal weaponry is still being used in armed conflicts today.

In Angola, 20 years after the end of the civil war, anti-personnel mines continue to victimize the lives of innocent civilians, including children and women. Landmines hinder the population in rural communities from getting free access to valuable land for agriculture and livestock breeding. Civilians continue to suffer the horrific consequences of anti-personnel mines. The truth is that the fighting stops, but landmines last for decades. Civilians bear the consequences for decades. The environment is damaged for decades. On top of that, removing mines is much more expensive than producing them.

Furthermore, landmines represent a serious obstacle to economic and social development and to the reconstruction of countries in post-conflict situations. That is why the Government of Angola, with the support of the international community, is implementing a comprehensive demining programme to achieve a country free of landmines by 2025. However, the economy of Angola was severely affected by the oil market crisis, which negatively affected the gross domestic product of the country. The situation was further aggravated by the coronavirus disease pandemic. As a result, the country's ability to continue assuming its financial obligations in relation to the demining process was severely affected, and its aspirations to be a mine-free country by 2025 might not be met.

Angola has made significant progress in the past couple of years in detecting and removing landmines. We were successful in reducing the mined area by two



thirds, from approximately 221 million square metres of mined land to approximately 70.2 million square metres. Nevertheless, the completion of the demining process still requires approximately \$217.9 million.

Angola is of the view that Member States and all relevant partners should spare no effort to contribute in an efficient and coordinated manner to meet the challenge of removing anti-personnel mines placed throughout the world and ensuring their destruction. The victims and survivors of mines, who are suffering from all kinds of physical and mental disabilities, deserve better attention. They were not responsible for their condition; they should not bear the cost alone. They need sustained support from us.

In conclusion, despite all challenges, Angola reaffirms its strong commitment to the total elimination of mines in the country by 2025 and to protecting and assisting the victims and survivors of mines. We would like to highlight that mines continue to pose an immense danger to human life and to the development process of many countries, particularly those experiencing a post-conflict situation.

Finally, I thank all international partners that are assisting Angola in getting rid of landmines. We also encourage all Member States to implement the legal instruments on this matter.

**Ms. Glasenhardt (Croatia):** Croatia aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of the European Union (EU) (see A/C.1/78/PV.18).

In addition to the EU statement, which already outlined what Croatia stands for, allow me to focus today on one issue only, with which Croatia, unfortunately, has vast experience, and that is landmines. As a country that was a victim of brutal aggression in the 1990s, Croatia is very much aware of the threat mines pose to human life and health, as well as the livelihoods of people. For nearly four long years, almost a third of Croatia's territory was occupied. Tens of thousands of mines were laid by the aggressor along the line of contact and in the occupied regions of the country.

After the liberation of its territory in 1995, Croatia very quickly began the process of demining. We established a legal framework and created a robust and efficient demining process and expertise. Today Croatia produces some of the world's best high-tech demining equipment. But demining is a lengthy process. Regardless of our success, even after several

decades of hard work, we are still demining some minor mine-contaminated areas of our territory, mostly in forested or mountainous regions.

The demining process in Croatia will be fully completed in the spring of 2026 — 31 years after the end of hostilities. That is why we are deeply concerned about the use of anti-personnel landmines, which cause irreparable humanitarian harm long after conflicts come to an end. The use of such mines should never be acceptable, by anyone, under any circumstances. Conflicts should end when the fighting stops; but landmines simply continue to kill after the fact.

In Croatia alone, more than 2,000 people have been killed or injured by mines. We are deeply grateful for the sacrifice and courage of almost 140 Croatian pyrotechnicians who have been fatally or seriously wounded in the line of duty. We also thank their fellow colleagues, former and currently active, from countries all around the world. Those brave people make the world, quite literally, a safer place, every single day. In that regard, we consider the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention as a *sine qua non* of disarmament and remain fully committed to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and its five Protocols as an essential international humanitarian law and arms control instrument.

Since the beginning of Russia's brutal aggression against Ukraine, nearly one third of Ukraine's territory has been contaminated with mines and cluster munitions. The landmines will have not only a long-lasting and devastating humanitarian effect on the suffering of Ukrainians; they are a global problem, ultimately affecting us all, as those mines contaminate the world's most fertile land. The ground that produces grain for the world might remain barren for years to come. In that regard, the global food supply will remain disrupted, and with it our global security.

In fact, the much-needed restoration of the global food supply also depends on our demining efforts in Ukraine, which is why, less than two weeks ago, Croatia hosted the first-ever high-level International Donors Conference on Humanitarian Demining in Ukraine. The Conference, which took place in Zagreb and was co-organized by the Governments of Ukraine and Croatia, confirmed the political, practical and financial support to Ukraine's demining efforts by 34 participating countries, pledging half a billion euros overall. Croatia will additionally contribute €5 million

for mine-clearance in Ukraine and is contributing to the EU comprehensive mine action programme for Ukraine, worth €20 million. Our non-governmental organizations are also working with their Ukrainian counterparts on teaching mine safety to Ukrainian children, including during their rehabilitation programmes taking place in Croatia. In addition, Croatian demining companies, and demining-equipment producers have signed a memorandum of understanding to localize production of spare parts for our demining machines in Ukraine.

Mines sow death and destruction worldwide. Wherever deployed, mines outlive their military objective. They restrict the movement of people and humanitarian aid, contaminate the land and often hinder, or altogether deny, access to water, food and trade. Croatia stands ready to share its experience and know-how with countries and partners globally, to the benefit of us all.

**Mrs. Ponikvar Velázquez** (Slovenia): I wish to align myself with the statement made by the representative of the European Union (see A/C.1/78/PV.18).

In our previous general statement (see A/C.1/78/PV.6), we already outlined our policy on conventional weapons. Today I would like to focus on three additional points.

First, as we assess the situation in the field of conventional weapons since the previous session of the First Committee, it is apparent that the situation is deteriorating. Regrettably, in current armed conflicts, we have observed an increased use of indiscriminate weapons, including anti-personnel mines, improvised explosive devices and cluster munitions, all of which are prohibited by international law. Owing to their indiscriminate nature, those types of conventional weapons violate the principles of international humanitarian law, specifically the principle of distinction between combatants and non-combatants. They also cause humanitarian crises and poses a significant threat to local civilian populations. Slovenia urges all States, as well as non-State actors, to refrain from using anti-personnel mines and cluster munitions. We call on all States to accede to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction and the Convention on Cluster Munitions.

The protection of civilians during and after armed conflicts is a cornerstone of our foreign policy. To further that goal, the Government of Slovenia

established the International Trust Fund for Enhancing Human Security in 1998. The Trust Fund primarily supports mine and cluster munition action, the clearance of explosive remnants of war and assistance to victims in affected countries. Since its inception in 1998, the Trust Fund has mobilized over €515 million to conduct operations all around the world, including Afghanistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Gaza and Ukraine. In 2022, Slovenia allocated €1.3 million for mine and cluster munition actions.

We remain concerned about the unregulated international trade in conventional weapons, which continues to be a source of global instability. Slovenia emphasizes the importance of transparency and the universalization of international conventions and treaties, particularly the Arms Trade Treaty. We believe that transparency is crucial and participation in reporting to the Register of Conventional Arms and the Arms Trade Treaty can enhance confidence, trust and transparency within the international community. We call on all United Nations Member States to increase their national reporting on those instruments and to strengthen them.

We place great importance on the role of new and emerging technologies in lethal autonomous systems. Discussions on that matter are ongoing within the framework of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons in Geneva. The upcoming meeting of States parties in November will address the mandate of the Group of Governmental Experts on Emerging Technologies in the Area of Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems. Slovenia supports a stronger mandate that will enable State parties to continue their discussions that may lead to the negotiations for a new international instrument on the matter.

**Mr. Lebbaz** (Algeria) (*spoke in Arabic*): My country's delegation reiterates its categorical and strong condemnation of the brutal aggression that has been targeting children, women and older persons of Gaza on a daily basis. That aggression has been targeting innocent and unarmed civilians, resulting in massacres and crimes against humanity and constituting a disgrace to humankind. We call for an immediate and unconditional cessation of that aggression and for the urgent delivery of humanitarian and medical aid without any conditions. We also reject any attempts to undertake forced displacement of the Palestinian people.

My country's delegation endorses the statements delivered on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, the Group of African States and the Group of Arab States (see A/C.1/78/PV.17). We would like to make the following statement in our national capacity.

Illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons continues to pose a major threat to security and stability in many regions throughout the world, especially Africa. Given that global challenge, Algeria contributes to all national, regional and international efforts aimed at prohibiting the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects to eliminate that trade with a view to preventing the diversion and transfer of such weapons towards unauthorized users at the international level.

Our relentless efforts are based on Algeria's unique experience in addressing the scourge of terrorism and multiple security challenges along its geographical borders.

I would like to take this opportunity to reaffirm Algeria's position with regard to conventional weapons as follows.

First, Algeria remains fully committed to the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and the International Tracing Instrument and calls for their full, balanced and comprehensive implementation.

Secondly, Algeria takes note of the report of the Secretary-General on the assistance to States for curbing the illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons and collecting them and the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects (A/78/126). In that regard, my country has contributed to promoting those efforts at the national level.

Thirdly, at the regional level, Algeria has been relentlessly working to implement the 2011 African Union Strategy on the Control of Illicit Proliferation, Circulation and Trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons. We have been fully engaged in the implementation of the African Union's Silencing the Guns in Africa initiative.

Algeria reiterates its historical commitment to international humanitarian law and continues to fulfil its obligations pursuant to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and its Protocols, to which it is a party. In that context, Algeria hopes that the

humanitarian legal framework will enable the continued development and adoption of humanitarian rules and principles that place human beings and their full and effective protection above all other considerations.

Furthermore, the rapid technological development of lethal autonomous weapons systems and their use in armed conflicts raise serious concerns. Therefore, Algeria supports the work of the Group of Governmental Experts on Emerging Technologies in the Area of Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems and seeks to promote its mandate in the context of the objectives of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and to arrive at a legally binding instrument on lethal autonomous weapons. My country's delegation would like to express its gratitude to all those concerned for their efforts to enhance the work of the Group of Governmental Experts and achieve tangible results.

The achievement of the noble goals of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction is one of our utmost priorities. Algeria has implemented its commitments pursuant to that Convention through its national efforts to eliminate anti-personnel mines and support their victims. That represents a model in combating anti-personnel mines and their destructive effects.

It is worth noting that, six years ago, Algeria successfully implemented its commitments on the elimination of land mines, pursuant to the Ottawa Convention. Algeria will continue to fully support that Convention, including through active participation in its Standing Committee.

**Ms. Gómez Sardiñas** (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): We support the statement made by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/78/PV.17).

We reiterate our commitment to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and the related protocols to which we are a party. We defend the legitimate rights of States to manufacture, import and store arms and ammunition to meet their legitimate needs for self-defence and security, in accordance with Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations.

Double standards persist in the field of disarmament. Some producers continue to transfer conventional weapons to non-State actors that are unauthorized to use them and divert them to illicit markets, while trying

to prevent developing countries from acquiring them and using them in self-defence. At the same time, we are continuing to see the development of conventional weapons that are increasingly strategic, sophisticated and deadly, while the imbalance in the production, possession and trade in those weapons is becoming more pronounced.

We reiterate our commitment to 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, which is the international benchmark adopted by consensus in this field, and to the outcome documents of its review conferences.

We support the establishment of a fellowship programme on small arms and light weapons, in particular for developing countries. We expect such a programme to contribute to capacity-building for the implementation of the Programme of Action.

We reaffirm the full validity and effectiveness of the international instrument to enable States to reliably identify and trace illicit small arms and light weapons.

Illegal transfers and diversions of small arms and light weapons to unauthorized non-State actors, which is the main source of illicit trafficking, must be stopped as a matter of urgency. The socioeconomic causes of this scourge must be addressed, including through cooperation and assistance to requesting States.

We maintain our position on the Arms Trade Treaty, which establishes parameters for the approval and denial of arms transfers to member States that are easily manipulable.

In view of our firm commitment to preventing and combating illicit trafficking in ammunition and to strictly complying with our national legislation and international obligations in this area, our delegation supported the adoption of the new global framework agreed by the Open-ended Working Group on Conventional Ammunition. The global framework, which is of a voluntary nature, contains political commitments that, without prejudice to national legal systems, could, if implemented in good faith, be effective, taking into account their necessary adaptation to different national realities and respecting the sovereign prerogatives of each State.

We advocate the adoption as soon as possible, within the framework of the United Nations, of a legally binding international instrument prohibiting the

manufacture, possession and use of fully autonomous weapons and establishing specific regulations for the use of semi-autonomous weapons.

In the face of the dizzying and worrisome growth of global military spending, when millions of people are living in extreme poverty and suffering from acute hunger, we advocate that the main producers of conventional weapons allocate these resources to sustainable development.

**Mr. Edu Mbasogo** (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): We support the statements made by the representatives of Indonesia and Nigeria on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and the Group of African States, respectively (see A/C.1/78/PV.17).

Despite the progress made so far, Africa today still faces significant challenges that need to be addressed, one of which is the lack of recognition by many arms- and ammunition-manufacturing countries of their responsibilities in the illegal trade in small arms and light weapons and other conventional weapons, as well as their ammunition, which are fuelling wars in Africa.

For many developed States and arms manufacturers, Africa is nothing more than a global market for the sale of their old weapons that have been decommissioned by their national armies. We call on arms-producing and arms-exporting States to strengthen their end-user verification mechanisms, because arms are being supplied to terrorist, rebel and criminal groups operating in areas of instability and conflict. We further condemn the double standards involved in illegally trading with rebel and terrorist groups. In many conflicts in Africa, as well as many other parts of the world, the constant overt and covert supply of small arms and conventional weapons leads to serious violations of international law, international humanitarian law and human rights law.

The illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and conventional weapons is driven by the flexibility of some developed States and arms manufacturers in prioritizing the export business of their weapons and ammunition industries over respecting international law and security. These factors constitute a serious threat to peace, security, stability and sustainable development in many regions of the world, and in Africa in particular. We are grateful to those States and companies that supply arms to our continent and to developing countries in a legal and transparent manner, respecting the procedures of legally established



Governments and in compliance with all international mechanisms on the arms trade.

An international mechanism must be created to hold defrauders and traffickers in the illegal arms and ammunition trade to account, including for the crimes committed with their weapons. Regrettably, existing legally binding instruments and political commitments aimed at preventing and eradicating the trafficking and diversion of small arms and light weapons, and other conventional weapons, and their ammunition, will continue to be limited without the collaboration of all actors in the life cycle of these weapons and ammunition.

Equatorial Guinea continues to witness the devastating effects in conflict-affected societies of such other conventional weapons as landmines, cluster munitions and, more broadly, explosive remnants of war. These weapons take a heavy toll on civilians during active hostilities and even decades after the end of conflict. The Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, the Convention on Cluster Munitions and Protocol V to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, on Explosive Remnants of War, have contributed significantly to saving lives, preventing maiming and preserving livelihoods, and we urge all States not yet parties to these instruments also to accede to them.

**Ms. De Schot** (New Zealand): This year we are confronted by mounting evidence of the use of illegal weapons. We are also seeing other weapons used in flagrant violation of international humanitarian law. In the face of this, it is more important than ever to uphold and reinforce international humanitarian law, including the treaties governing conventional weapons.

Aotearoa New Zealand is a strong supporter of the Convention on Cluster Munitions, the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, the Arms Trade Treaty and the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects (CCW). We will once again support these treaties' corresponding draft resolutions in the First Committee, listed as A/C.1/78/L.20, A/C.1/78/L.39, A/C.1/78/L.42 and A/C.1/78/L.44, and we urge others to do the same.

The aforementioned treaties are integral parts of the humanitarian law and disarmament architecture. They reduce human suffering and offer explicit protections to civilians in armed conflict. As a State party to those

treaties, we continue to condemn any and all use of cluster munitions and anti-personnel mines, and we oppose any developments that increase the likelihood of their use. We call for production, stockpiling and transfer of these weapons to cease.

We reiterate our call on States parties to the Arms Trade Treaty to comply with their obligations at all times. We make the same call on CCW High Contracting Parties with respect to their obligations under its Protocols.

We also take the opportunity to once again reiterate our strong support for the Political Declaration on Strengthening the Protection of Civilians from the Humanitarian Consequences Arising from the Use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas. In advance of next year's implementation conference in Oslo, we encourage countries to endorse the Declaration, if they have not already done so, as a way to concretely demonstrate support for the protection of civilians in armed conflict.

Finally, Aotearoa New Zealand is pleased to be a main sponsor of the new draft resolution A/C.1/78/L.56, entitled "Lethal autonomous weapons systems". The risks and challenges posed by these systems warrant the attention of and consideration by the full United Nations membership. We encourage all delegations to support this draft resolution and consider co-sponsoring it.

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

**Mr. Belousov** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We reject the baseless accusations we have heard from Western delegations in connection with the conventional weapons used in our special military operation in Ukraine. These insinuations serve one sole aim: diverting attention from crimes committed by the Ukrainian armed formations.

The number of daily violations of the norms and principles of international humanitarian law by the Kyiv regime are climbing apace. The Ukrainian Armed Forces are absolutely deliberately using inhumane tactics of warfare. They are deploying heavy weaponry; setting up their firing positions and ammunition depots in schools, hospitals, homes and dangerous chemical

production facilities; attacking nuclear power plants and areas where prisoners of war are held; and using civilians as human shields and civilian infrastructure for military purposes. The most flagrant example is their use of *lepestok* PFM-1 anti-personnel mines against civilians.

Considering the fact that the Ukrainian Armed Forces are strewing these mines in populated areas far from the front line, they pose a threat far beyond the danger they pose to soldiers. In many settlements, we have seen these mines deliberately placed to harm civilians, endangering children, in particular, who risk stepping on them or picking them up out of curiosity.

We note the full flouting by the Ukrainian authorities of international humanitarian law norms and the Protocol Additional I to the Geneva Conventions of 1949. We see that the Western countries have absolutely no interest whatsoever in an impartial investigation to find those behind this catastrophic situation. In essence, the West is turning a blind eye to the Ukrainians' many violations of international conventions.

The Kyiv regime is committing its crimes with the assistance of Western countries. This support is not only in the form of words, but also massive deliveries of weapons to Kyiv. Since the beginning of the special military operation, the total volume of support given to the Kyiv regime, including by European Union countries, has exceeded \$160 billion. Deliveries to Ukraine of weapons and military technology, including depleted uranium shells and cluster munitions, which are inhumane weapons and pose a major threat to civilians and the environment, are constantly being ramped up.

The Russian Federation's engineering forces often find German explosive-type weapons, such as DM 31 anti-tank mines and DM 11 high explosive fragmentation munitions. A particular danger is posed by DM 1399 mines, which are launched from MARS multiple rocket launchers, specifically the NATO Mars II launcher. Anti-tank mines, such as the DM 1274, and LARS rocket launchers are being used. Russian soldiers have also found HPD-2 mines, produced by the French, which are impossible to disarm and remove. The use of these weapons is in direct violation of the Amended Protocol II to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW). The Kyiv regime's violations of the principles and norms of international humanitarian law, including the provisions of the CCW

and the Anti-Personnel Landmines Convention, require an immediate response by the international community, and the perpetrators must be held to account.

We also wish to note the attacks made by the representative of South Korea in her statement (see A/C.1/78/PV.18). The relationship between Russia and North Korea has a long history, and its positive dynamic is marked by good-neighbourly relations and mutual respect and is in the interest of mutually beneficial cooperation, the maintenance of regional security and the settlement of long-standing problems on the Korean Peninsula. The bilateral cooperation between Russia and North Korea is fully in keeping with the United Nations Charter and the purposes and principles of the Organization.

I will turn now to the sanctions regime against the against North Korea. The more that this regime is used, the clearer it becomes that the sanctions pressure on Pyongyang is a failure. One of the reasons for that is the constant ratcheting up of tensions in and around the Korean Peninsula by Seoul and its allies. In that regard, we would note the increased pressure placed on Pyongyang, which is manifested in an increase in the scale and intensity of the joint exercises undertaken by South Korea and its allies, as well as the mobilizing of strategic capabilities in the region in the light of the U.S.-South Korean agreements reached this year.

All of that is blocking the political and diplomatic settlement of the problems that have accumulated in the region through renewed talks among all stakeholders, which is exactly what the Russian Federation has been working towards.

**Mr. Kim In Chol** (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): My delegation is taking the floor in response to the provocative statement made by the representative of South Korea (see A/C.1/78/PV.18). We categorically reject South Korea's unfounded and unsubstantiated allegations. It is sickening and disgusting to witness South Korea desperately attempting to incite a fratricidal confrontation, and in this august forum no less.

South Korea, which is no more than a colonial subordinate of the United States, cannot be allowed to interfere with the development of equal and reciprocal relations between sovereign States. As it stands now, South Korea is running wild as it spearheads implementation of the hostile policy of the United States against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea through massive joint nuclear war exercises with

the United States and the deployment of that country's nuclear strategic assets. The military alliance between the United States and South Korea and the triangular military alliance among the United States, Japan and South Korea have clearly shown South Korea's hostility towards the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and its neighbouring countries. Joint nuclear war exercises, which are an extension of the terrorist Nuclear Consultative Group and aimed at preparing a pre-emptive nuclear strike against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, are simply moves by these cancer-like entities, which are jeopardizing the international order consistent with the purposes and principles of the United Nations set forth in the Charter and posing a great threat to global peace and security. We reiterate our firm position that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has never recognized the sanctions resolutions of the Security Council, which have been cooked up by forces hostile to my country with a view to stamping out its sovereignty and right to existence.

It is only a matter of time before South Korea will buckle under the growing pressure from the United States to provide active military aid to Ukraine, since it has no choice but to follow the instructions of its master, as it dares not calculate whether the master's demand will bring it tranquillity or an insurmountable security crisis.

South Korea will pay a high price for its reckless outbursts. It should bear in mind that, if it continues to groundlessly provoke us, it will face an extreme security crisis, which is far from its goal of defusing its security-related uneasiness. It should not dare to provoke a sleeping tiger.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea will continue to develop traditional relations of friendship and cooperation with the Russian Federation and other independent sovereign countries, thereby deterring the hostile forces' military threats, provocations, and high-handed and arbitrary practices, and we will firmly defend peace and security on the Korean peninsula and in the rest of the world.

**Mr. Sharoni** (Israel): I am compelled to react to the baseless accusations made by the representatives of Iraq (see A/C.1/78/PV.18) and Mauritania and Saudi Arabia, and to the manipulations made by the representative of Iran.

It has been more than two weeks since Hamas perpetrated the worst massacre of Jews since the Holocaust. The 7 October massacre was not done with weapons of mass destruction. It was done with rifles, grenades, mortars and rocket-propelled grenades. The massacre is a perfect example of why we are all in this conference room today: to prevent deadly conventional weapons from getting into the hands of murderous genocidal groups.

Throughout the debate on this cluster, we have repeatedly heard false accusations, which are based, sadly, on Hamas propaganda. It is a shame that those who make such baseless accusations have not learned from last week's experience, when the misleading claims against Israel with regard to the tragedy at the Al Ahli Hospital were rebutted. As Committee members have seen, accusations against Israel were "fake news" created by Hamas, which was swiftly struck down with true evidence.

This cluster has focused on global challenges in the area of conventional arms, a matter that is raised by many Member States, and justly so. It has also focused on the issue of the diversion of weapons and ammunition. Since the unprovoked attack by Hamas on 7 October, almost 10,000 rockets were shot from Gaza into Israel — rockets that were aimed to kill innocent Israeli children, shot cynically from the vicinity of Palestinian children who were being used as human shields. Following the attack by Hamas on Israeli towns and villages, the number of weapons captured by Israel displays one sad and blunt truth: Hamas was armed to the teeth, with rocket-propelled grenade launchers, improvised explosive devices, mines, anti-aircraft and anti-tank rockets and machine guns, all in amounts that could easily arm a whole national army.

Naturally, what was captured is just the tip of the iceberg of how much Hamas really has. So, speaking of diversion, where do Committee members think all this weaponry comes from?

Iran has used conventional weapons to massacre its own people, as seen in the thousands murdered during the recent Mahsa Amini protests. Unstable at home and hated abroad, the Iranian regime uses proxies to try to survive.

Iran is the largest proliferator of weapons in the Middle East and, through its chain of supply, arms its proxies in the entire region. Wishing to destabilize the region but selfishly wanting to keep its hands clean, it

supports terrorist organizations: from the Houthis in Yemen to Hizbullah in Lebanon to Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq in Iraq, Iran's fingerprints are everywhere.

It is no different in Gaza, where Iran annually provides Hamas with funds in the amount of \$100 million. These funds are not meant to be used to build hospitals or schools. These Iranian funds are meant to be used to develop robust arsenals of weapons that would later target Israeli civilians.

If Committee members want to discuss the issue of diversion, this is a good place to start. If they want to discuss how Iran's capacity-building measures are implemented in the Middle East, they should come to Gaza and see Hamas' terror capacities.

More than ever before, Israel is standing at the forefront of efforts to defend the Middle East from falling into the cynical and genocidal hands of the Islamic Republic of Iran. We will continue to stand in this conference room and everywhere else to defend the truth from Iran's manipulations. The people of Israel deserve this. The people of the Middle East deserve this.

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

**Mr. Karczmarz** (European Union): I feel compelled to take the floor in response to two issues mentioned by the representative of the Russian Federation.

The first issue is the Russian Federation's misleading narrative on the implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT). As a long-standing supporter of the objectives, universalization and implementation of the ATT, the European Union (EU) would like to stress that exporting arms to conflict zones is not, per se, inconsistent with the ATT, which might not be clear to a non-State party. What is relevant in this regard is the very first of the principles acknowledged in the ATT, namely, the inherent right of all States to self-defence, as also recognized in Article 51 of the United Nations Charter.

The EU considers the exportation of major equipment to be fully in line with its legal obligations under the United Nations Charter and the ATT, which indeed prohibits support provided to an aggressor, not support provided to a State victim of external aggression. Accordingly, all arms exports to Russia are inconsistent with the ATT.

Let me also underline the fact that external military support for Ukraine, including by the EU and its member States, is in no small part designed to help Ukraine defend its civilian population against the countless indiscriminate attacks by Russian forces, which have already caused thousands of deaths of innocent civilians, and which are blatant violations of international law, notably international humanitarian law and international human rights law. In addition, Ukraine has the right to regain full control of the full entirety of its territory within its internationally recognized borders.

With regard to the second issue, since the Russian delegation raised the topic of war crimes, let me take this opportunity to turn the attention of the Committee to the second report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine on the situation of human rights in Ukraine stemming from the Russian aggression (A/78/540). The report, which was submitted by the Secretary-General to the General Assembly on 20 October, sets out another solid body of evidence that Russian authorities have committed, inter alia, many indiscriminate attacks against the civilian population of Ukraine, which is also a war crime. For such a policy of State-sponsored criminal acts, there will be no impunity.

**Mr. Grigoryan** (Armenia): I would like to exercise my delegation's right of reply in response to the statement made by the representative of Azerbaijan.

Azerbaijan's baseless and false accusations are part of a massive disinformation campaign designed to justify its aggressive actions, in particular various crimes, including planning and implementing a policy of ethnic cleansing against the people of Nagorno-Karabakh. The most recent example of such aggression was the large-scale attack that took place on 19 September, which was pre-planned. No false accusations can hide that fact.

During the aggression, Azerbaijani armed forces deliberately targeted civilians and civilian infrastructure. The aggression was preceded by ten months of a barbaric seizure of Nagorno-Karabakh through the blockade of the Lachin corridor, in blatant violation of the 9 November trilateral statement and relevant orders of the International Court of Justice. This heinous crime forced more than a hundred thousand people to flee their homeland.



Any attempt to justify such crimes is just a manifestation of the depth of Azerbaijan's disregard for the norms of international law as well as its obligations thereunder. There can be no cover-up of these barbaric violations; they must be condemned, and those responsible must be held to account.

For three decades, mine-contamination activities by the Azerbaijani armed forces have brought about the killing or injury of many civilians, including children. The severe damage caused to the people of Nagorno-Karabakh and the border communities of Armenia has also significantly impeded socioeconomic development.

Furthermore, as part of its wider policy of impeding the international community's access to Nagorno-Karabakh for humanitarian purposes, Azerbaijan has consistently obstructed mine-clearance activities. An example of that was the termination of the mining-related efforts undertaken by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in 2016.

Over the years, Azerbaijan has gravely violated its obligations under the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE Treaty) by exceeding its ceilings in four of five categories of major conventional arms established by the Treaty and by completely excluding a major part of its armed forces from inspection and verification. That has enabled Azerbaijan to concentrate a large number of unverifiable forces and military equipment along the borders of Armenia and in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict zone, which have been used to target civilians and civilian infrastructure, spread terror and completely depopulate Nagorno-Karabakh.

It is extremely deplorable that Azerbaijan, a country that for decades has been massively violating all its existing obligations in the area of conventional arms control, specifically the CFE Treaty, has been seeking to normalize violence and aggression, manipulate international forums, including the First Committee's thematic discussion on conventional arms control, and disseminate its propagandistic narratives aimed at creating a pretext for its continuous aggressive actions, which remain the principal threat to the peace and security in the region.

**Ms. Yoon** (Republic of Korea): I would like to exercise my delegation's right of reply in response to the statements made in exercise of the right of reply by the representatives of the Russian Federation and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

My delegation wishes to reiterate that any military cooperation with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea should be undertaken while duly respecting the Security Council resolutions, which prohibit, inter alia, all arms transfers both to and from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. This also applies to technical cooperation that could contribute to the Democratic People's Republic's weapons development programmes. As we all know, the Security Council unanimously agreed, first in 2006, (resolution 1718 (2006)) and multiple times since then, to impose such prohibitions on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, as that country's pursuit of its nuclear-weapon programmes constitutes a grave threat to the international peace and security.

The threat from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has not gone away. Indeed, through an unprecedented level of provocations this year, including multiple intercontinental ballistic-missile launches, tensions this year have escalated, and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is now openly threatening a pre-emptive nuclear attack.

Now more than ever, it is imperative for States Members of the United Nations to sincerely and thoroughly implement all Security Council resolutions, so as to stop the Democratic People's Republic of Korea from further advancing its dangerous capabilities. Russia, in particular, as a permanent member of the Security Council, has an even greater responsibility to respect and observe the resolutions that it agreed to adopt.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea says that it does not accept Security Council resolutions. As a State Member of the United Nations, it is obligated to accept and carry out the decisions of the Security Council in accordance with the Charter. Simply put, as long as it maintains its membership in the United Nations, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea cannot arbitrarily pick and choose which rules to follow.

Finally, I want to reiterate that the combined defence and deterrence posture of the Republic of Korea and the United States, including our joint exercises and training, is in response to the military threat posed by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. These exercises and training are long-standing, routine and defensive in nature. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea's ever-growing unlawful nuclear and missile threats are the very reason why we are strengthening

extended deterrence cooperation with the United States, not the other way around.

**Mr. Al-Sadr** (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): It is no secret that the Israeli entity continues to violate dozens of international resolutions, including those on disarmament and international security. It is using internationally prohibited weapons against unarmed civilians, especially women, children and the elderly, in a flagrant violation of international law, international humanitarian law and relevant resolutions of international legitimacy. That is having a negative impact on regional and international security and stability, particularly in the Middle East.

Furthermore, the Israeli entity has refused to engage in international efforts pertaining to the conference for the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East. Accordingly, Iraq wishes to alert the Committee members that the Israeli entity's repeated violations of laws, including the laws of war, will ultimately undermine international efforts to achieve international security and stability.

Iraq stresses the need for an immediate ceasefire in the Gaza Strip, the opening of border crossings and the delivery of humanitarian and relief assistance, after which there must be a safe and comprehensive exchange of hostages and detainees. Iraq reiterates that the Palestinians have the right to live on their land without settlements, fear of displacement or need to seek asylum elsewhere. The developments that occurred and continue to occur in Gaza, in particular the shelling of the Al-Ma'madani hospital, which left hundreds killed or injured, amount to genocide. There is no question that that attack is part of an ongoing war crime that the Israeli entity has been perpetrating in the Gaza Strip since 7 October; it is an attack that cannot be ignored for its brutality. It could even have a negative impact the First Committee's ability to adopt decisions and recommendations to achieve international peace and security.

In conclusion, Iraq calls for the Palestinian question not to be dismissed or overlooked. It is time to commence talks that lead to resolving the Palestinian question, so that Palestinians can enjoy an independent State of their own, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

**Mr. Alqaisi** (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): I exercise my delegation's right of reply in response to what the representative of Israel just said. I would like to

note that every time Israel mentions the dangerous escalation in the occupied Palestinian territories and the abominable aggression on innocent civilians in the Gaza Strip, which has perilously grown in intensity over the past 24 hours, while it attempts to falsify facts and justify the crimes it perpetrated and continues to perpetrate against Palestinians in the Strip, the Group of Arab States will respond to these desperate efforts with a growing voice of truth — one that will be louder than the voice of the occupier and aggressor.

On behalf of the Group of Arab States, I once again condemn the brutal Israeli aggression and its ongoing shelling against the people of Gaza, which have killed thousands of innocent civilians, along with journalists and humanitarian workers working under the auspices of the United Nations, and will continue to do so. The aggressor is destroying houses, medical and educational facilities and places of worship, and committing other crimes that violate not only basic moral and humanitarian values, but also international law. In that regard, I would like to note that, since 7 October, the Israeli aggression has resulted in 5,087 martyrs, including 2,055 children, 1,119 women and 217 elderly persons, while more than 15,000 people have been injured. We note that 70 per cent of the martyrs are children, women and elderly persons.

We stress once again the need to achieve a ceasefire, stop the aggression against the people of Gaza and allow them to receive full and unhindered basic humanitarian and medical assistance. Furthermore, any attempts to forcibly displace the Palestinians must stop.

**Mr. Ghorbanpour Najafabadi** (Islamic Republic of Iran): In exercise of my delegation's right of reply, I would like to respond to the completely false and baseless allegations made against my country by the representative of the Israeli regime, which demonstrates a regrettable disregard for the principles of a rules-based system and the dignity of this august body, first and foremost. I would like to firmly reject those unfounded allegations.

It is disheartening to observe this recurring pattern where the Israeli regime commits acts that contravene international law and then proceeds to blame others while invoking baseless accusations. Such hate-filled speeches only serve to divert the attention of the international community from the grave crimes this regime perpetrates on a daily basis.

When addressing the matter of weapons of mass destruction, it is imperative to note that the Israeli regime stands as the sole entity in the Middle East to refrain from joining such international agreements as the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological Weapons Convention. By consistently failing to declare its nuclear arsenal and fulfil its armament commitments, and by refusing entry to international inspectors to assess its nuclear programme and activities, the Israeli regime remains in breach of international law.

Let me reiterate that only nations under occupation have the right to self-defence against occupiers. The Islamic Republic of Iran stands with the Palestinians in their struggle to realize their right to self-determination and liberate their territory. However, it is absurd to claim that Iran has assisted Palestinians in Gaza militarily, when the Israeli regime has, since 2007, imposed on the Strip one of the most severe blockades in history — from sea, land and air — and prevented even the most necessary humanitarian aid to be delivered to the people of Gaza.

Since the start of this conflict, the wicked Israeli regime has killed more than 5,000 Palestinian civilians, 2,050 of whom are children, which amounts to an average of 120 children being killed each day. That means that approximately five children are being killed in Gaza every hour. As we have been speaking at this meeting, Gaza has been under heavy bombardment, with more killing and more casualties.

We are heartened to witness the resolute and widespread condemnation of these atrocities by numerous nations. However, that should not preclude the imperative for the United Nations, especially the Security Council, to take necessary action to put an immediate end to the atrocities committed by this regime. According to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, until now, 29 members of its staff in Gaza have been killed by this regime, half of whom were teachers.

To outline the concrete steps that need to be taken to halt this regime from realizing its reprehensible plans against the defenceless Palestinian population, I refer Committee members to the final communique of the extraordinary open-ended meeting of the Executive Committee of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), held at the level of foreign ministers on 18 October 2023, which was adopted by all 54 of the OIC member

States. The provisions outlined in this communique are acutely pertinent to the current situation, and it is incumbent upon the Israeli regime to obey the calls relating to the various issues contained therein, which I will address later if necessary.

**Ms. Petit (France)** (*spoke in French*): I wish to exercise my delegation's right of reply in response to the false allegations made by the representative of Russian Federation against my country with regard to our export of landmines. France fully complies with its obligations under the Ottawa Convention, as well as those pursuant to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and its Protocol II on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Mines, Booby-Traps and Other Devices, as amended on 3 May 1996. It also complies with all the obligations arising from the Arms Trade Treaty, to which it is a party. The anti-tank mines deployed by French armed forces are fully compliant with these obligations and go even further, as they include robust self-neutralizing mechanisms.

**Ms. Storsve (United States of America)**: I would like first to associate my delegation with the response delivered by the Ambassador of the Republic of Korea a few minutes ago.

Turning to comments made by the delegation of Iran, Iran's development, procurement and proliferation of missiles and missile-related technology remains one of the greatest challenges to international peace and security. We see the horrific impact of Iran's provision of missiles and unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) to designated terrorist groups and militant proxies that directly threaten the security of Israel and our Gulf partners. We see the destructive result of Iran's transfer of lethal unmanned aerial vehicles to Russia to target critical civilian infrastructure and kill civilians in Ukraine. We remain focused on addressing Iran's destabilizing proliferation activities, in particular its missile and UAV programmes, and the threats that they pose to the world.

The United States unequivocally rejects and condemns the heinous terrorist attacks by Hamas and other terrorist groups that took place in Israel starting 7 October, including the taking of hostages, murder, sexual violence and indiscriminate firing of rockets. Many of these terrorist attacks also affected American citizens. We further express deepest sympathy and condolences to all the victims and their families and to the Government of Israel and all Governments whose

citizens were targeted and lost their lives in these attacks. The United States also expresses its deepest sympathy and condolences to Palestinian civilians and all civilians who have lost their lives since 7 October, including at the Al Ahli Baptist Hospital on 17 October.

As my delegation noted before, we believe it is important to acknowledge the facts as much as possible. Two facts are of particular relevance in this regard: first, it is essential to acknowledge that the 7 October attack on Israel was a terrorist assault conducted by Hamas; secondly, based on all available evidence, it also seems that the bombings of the Al Ahli Hospital was caused by a Palestinian Islamic Jihad rocket and not by Israel.

The United States stands with Israel as it defends itself from terrorism. We reaffirm the inherent right of all States to individual or collective self-defence, while also reaffirming that member States must comply with all their obligations under international law.

**Mr. Gurbanov** (Azerbaijan): Over the years, Armenia has created and perpetuated its own distorted version of international legal norms and principles—to be precise, its own version of reality—and the statement its delegation made just now is not an exception. We must therefore once again set the record straight.

First of all, we must emphasize in this context that Armenia has neither legal, political nor moral grounds to make any statements about the internationally recognized territory of Azerbaijan or the matters falling within my country's exclusive sovereign rights, competence and responsibilities. The anti-terror measures conducted on 19 and 20 September were aimed at preventing further provocations and terror acts from being committed by Armenia's armed forces and illegal armed formations against civilian employees and military personnel. These measures also aimed at restoring the constitutional system of the Republic of Azerbaijan. During the operations, the Azerbaijan army incapacitated only legitimate military targets of the Armenian armed forces. In other words, only legitimate military targets were destroyed. Azerbaijan did not target civilians. Any claim in that regard is groundless and unacceptable.

The information spread by the Armenian delegation about the firing on civilian objects by the Azerbaijan army is not just provocative; it is disinformation. Under relevant international and domestic law, Azerbaijan has the full right to adopt and implement the necessary legislative or other measures against the illegal

possession, stockpiling and transfer of small arms and light weapons within its internationally recognized territory and to take any action under appropriate national law against groups and individuals engaged in those illegal activities. These national prerogatives are reaffirmed in the 2001 Report of the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and in General Assembly resolution 77/71.

In our letter to the Secretary-General dated 27 September 2023, circulated as a document of the General Assembly and Security Council (A/78/394-S/2023/711), on the developments in the aftermath of the local counter-terrorism measures taken by Azerbaijan in the Garabagh region, we provided ample photographic evidence of the accumulated offensive weaponry seized from the Armenian illegal armed formations.

It is necessary to re-emphasize that Armenia used Azerbaijan's Garabagh region to conceal its military activities from the relevant international and regional arms control and verification mechanisms, including the deployment of forces to and the stockpiling of undeclared and uncontrolled military equipment, armaments and ammunitions in these territories. This was also done contrary to the recommendations set out in the Report of the Disarmament Commission for 1993 relating to confidence- and security-building measures in arms control regimes and other military activities at global and regional levels. The wide-ranging abuse of the Lachin road by Armenia over the past three years necessitated Azerbaijan's legitimate and legal action of establishing a border checkpoint within its internationally recognized territory to ensure security and order on its border with Armenia.

Unlike Armenia, Azerbaijan upholds its commitment to transparency measures by participating in regular information and notification exchanges within the terms of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE Treaty) and the 2011 Vienna Document of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. It should be emphasized that the cumulative quantity of Armenia's undeclared equipment subject to limitations set by the CFE Treaty stationed in the Garabagh region of Azerbaijan until recently has far exceeded the ceilings allowed under the Treaty and was not declared by Armenia for years.



The number of landmine victims we indicated in our statement, namely, more than 3,400 persons since 1991, is not just a statistic or a subject to be denied. It is a tragedy of more than 3,400 persons — of more than 3,400 families — for which Armenia is responsible. All the narratives we heard from the representative of Armenia earlier fully resemble its typical pattern over almost three decades.

**The Chair:** We have exhausted the time available for this meeting. I sincerely thank the interpreters for all their work and for giving us an extra ten minutes.

I note that, due to the time constraints, the following delegations are unable to exercise their right of reply: the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the Islamic Republic of Iran, for a second intervention; and Saudi Arabia, for a first intervention. They will be heard at our next meeting, tomorrow. I would like to remind delegations that the Committee will convene an additional plenary meeting tomorrow morning in Conference Room 2, where we will continue the discussions under the cluster on conventional weapons.

*The meeting rose at 6.10 p.m.*