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First Committee

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Official Records

Chair: Mr. Paulauskas (Lithuania)

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

Agenda items 90 to 106 (continued)

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

The Chair: Before I open the floor, I would like to encourage all delegations to respect the time limits for their statements. I would also like to inform delegations that 37 speakers remain on the list. According to our programme of work, we should complete consideration of the cluster “Other weapons of mass destruction” today.

Mrs. Petit (France) (*spoke in French*): Before I deliver my national statement, I wish to extend my condolences to all the families of the victims following the tragedy that took place at the Al-Ahli Hospital in Gaza City, of which a large number of Palestinian civilians were victims, and to all the victims since the terrorist attack by Hamas against Israel on 7 October. France calls for respect for international humanitarian law and the protection of civilians and is acting to promote de-escalation.

France aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of the European Union (see A/C.1/78/PV.14) and wishes to make the following additional remarks in its national capacity.

Adherence by all States to non-proliferation standards in the area of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery is imperative. We must

collectively combat the threat posed by the proliferation of nuclear, ballistic, chemical and biological weapons and reject the normalization of proliferation crises and the perceived impunity enjoyed by certain States.

In recent years the taboo against the use of chemical weapons has been repeatedly violated. The use of chemical weapons is unacceptable anywhere, at any time, by anyone, under any circumstances. We condemn the repeated use of chemical weapons by the Syrian regime against its own population, as repeatedly documented by independent mechanisms and by Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) teams. Syria must demonstrate transparency regarding the status of its stocks of chemical weapons, in accordance with obligations under Security Council resolution 2118 (2013), adopted in 2013. Only strict compliance with its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) will enable it to regain its rights and privileges as a State party, which were suspended by decision of the Conference of States Parties in April 2021.

The attempted assassination of Alexei Navalny in August 2020 using a neurotoxic agent from the Novichok family, as confirmed by the OPCW, is yet another illustration of the use of chemical weapons on the territory of a State party to the CWC. We strongly condemn that act.

France will continue to lead the fight against impunity, particularly with its partners in the International Partnership against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons, so that the perpetrators of those attacks can be identified and held to account.

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France also reaffirms its full support for the Secretary-General's Mechanism for Investigation of the Alleged Use of Chemical, Biological or Toxin Weapons, whose independence represents a major guarantee of credibility when it is deployed. In order to strengthen the Mechanism, in late September France, in cooperation with the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs, organized a basic training session for 25 international experts from the Mechanism's pool.

Furthermore, we must continue our efforts to strengthen the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC). The ninth Review Conference of the States Parties to the BWC achieved a significant outcome by establishing a Working Group, the vice-chairmanship of which we are honoured to hold. We commend the constructive spirit shown at its initial meetings and hope for substantive results. We convey our full support to the Brazilian chairmanship so that the discussions held in December on verification, confidence-building measures and transparency, *inter alia*, can maintain their positive momentum in further discussions on international cooperation and science and technology. It will be crucial to sustain that commitment and to avoid any polarization of discussions that could hinder the progress of our work.

The proposals made this year on the prohibition of radiological weapons address a long-standing concern about a category of weapons that is distinct from those with which we are familiar. We encourage any deliberations and work in that regard.

France is, of course, committed to the International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards regime. I will not go over the list of proliferation crises that have already been mentioned in the first cluster.

The illegal development of means of delivery of weapons of mass destruction and their sophistication and dissemination also continue to represent a threat to global stability. We therefore call on all States to abide by The Hague Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missiles Proliferation and to accede to the Missile Technology Control Regime guidelines. We will continue our efforts in the framework of the Proliferation Security Initiative and support the strengthening the role and expertise of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1540 (2004).

Ms. Woergoetter (Austria): Austria fully aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the

European Union (see A/C.1/78/PV.14) and wishes to add some remarks from a national perspective.

The absolute prohibition of all weapons of mass destruction is an achievement for the good of humankind and an important milestone towards a world free of weapons of mass destruction. Upholding the integrity and credibility of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) is in our collective security interest.

Nevertheless, flagrant violations of those fundamental legal norms have been committed. The taboo against chemical weapons has been weakened through its use and threat of use. We condemn in the strongest terms any use or threat of use of biological or chemical weapons by anyone, at any time and under any circumstances.

We are strongly concerned about Syria's continued lack of compliance with its obligations under the CWC and call on it to resolve all pending issues regarding its initial declaration and fully cooperate with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW).

We urge Russia to allow an international investigation into the assassination attempt on the Russian opposition figure Alexei Navalny and to provide answers to the questions addressed pursuant to article IX of the CWC.

There must not be impunity for those who develop or use chemical or biological weapons. All perpetrators must be held accountable. Austria is aligned with the International Partnership against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons.

Preventing the re-emergence of chemical weapons must remain a priority. We commend the impartial work of the OPCW in investigating the use of chemical weapons and the fight against impunity. We fully support the Director-General and his team in their work and strongly reject any attempts to discredit the organization.

Austria reiterates its unwavering support for the Secretary-General's Mechanism for Investigation of the Alleged Use of Chemical, Biological or Toxin Weapons. The independence of that crucial international investigation instrument must be preserved.

We call urgently on Russia to stop its disinformation, which runs counter to the objective and purpose of

the BWC and CWC and carries a dangerous potential for escalation.

The finalization of the destruction of all declared chemical-weapons stockpiles is an important milestone for the OPCW. The newly established ChemTech Centre is a welcome step towards further strengthening verification, capacity-building and international cooperation.

For much too long the Biological Weapons Convention has been lacking effective monitoring, verification and compliance mechanisms. The Working Group on the Strengthening of the Biological Weapons Convention offers an opportunity to finally make progress towards a more robust regime that is able to effectively uphold the strong norm of prohibition enshrined in the Convention. Verification is a central element. We need to make headway to ensure that the BWC continues to be relevant in future.

Austria fully recognizes the need to strengthen measures for cooperation and assistance. Likewise, the Convention must be able to respond to potential threats related to the rapid development of life sciences and biotechnology. Technological advances such as in the area of artificial intelligence add to the complexity of the challenges. The Secretary-General, in his Policy Brief on A New Agenda for Peace, addressed in particular the risks in the field of security linked to advances in biology. That underlines the need for a scientific review mechanism to be established with urgency.

We welcome the initiative by the United States to make progress in the field of radiological weapons and to achieve a prohibition of their use. At the same time, we should invest in additional efforts regarding the development, deployment and stockpiling of such weapons, as we were tasked to do by the General Assembly at its first special session devoted to disarmament.

Finally, multistakeholder cooperation is key to tackling the fundamental changes in science and technology, including at the intersection of biology and chemistry.

Mr. Al-Mehaizza (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): We would like to reiterate our thanks to you, Mr. Chair, for your efforts and to the members of participating delegations.

My country's delegation associates itself with the statements delivered by the representatives of the Group

of Arab States and of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries on other weapons of mass destruction (see A/C.1/78/PV.14).

The international community is cognizant of the danger that weapons of mass destruction represent as well as their long-term damaging effects in the event of their use. That issue is of utmost importance in international efforts to eliminate those weapons. For that reason, the international community has adopted international instruments and binding resolutions to prohibit the production, acquisition and use of such weapons in order to save humankind from the scourge of their use and to help it avoid paying the high price that millions of people have already paid due to the indiscriminate use of those weapons as a result of the irresponsible decisions of certain parties that flout international law and do not respect human dignity. That is why the international community must make concerted efforts to ban the acquisition of such weapons, prohibit their use for any reason and ensure strict adherence to the legal obligations contained in relevant international treaties.

The State of Qatar is convinced that the peaceful settlement of armed conflicts is the ideal option to maintain international peace and security and to rid the world of conflicts, which have been exploited by terrorist groups wishing to acquire weapons of mass destruction.

Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) affirms that nuclear, chemical and biological weapons represent a threat to international peace and security, and it prohibits the provision of support to any illegal actors that seek to develop, procure, manufacture, obtain, transfer or use such weapons of mass destruction. States must put in place effective laws to prevent non-State actors from accessing such weapons.

Resources and energy are abundant in our region. However, it suffers from upheavals and conflicts as a result of the presence of weapons of mass destruction. That creates a breeding ground for the presence of terrorist groups and adds a new and dangerous dimension, especially if weapons were to fall into the hands of those groups or be used by them. That is why the State of Qatar reiterates its unreserved support for international cooperation in order to address that danger and spares no effort in eliminating the use or threat of use of weapons of mass destruction, in order

to reduce tensions in the region and to promote regional and international peace and security.

In accordance with its policy in the area of the disarmament of weapons of mass destruction and the fight against all forms of terrorism, the State of Qatar is continuing its efforts to implement all its obligations as a State party to the international conventions on disarmament, including the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological Weapons Convention, as well as treaties on the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. We engage with our partners within the General Assembly in support of all legal instruments and initiatives that promote disarmament, non-proliferation and regional and international security. We also implement the relevant commitments on the non-proliferation of chemical, biological and nuclear weapons.

In conclusion, the great danger posed by the use of weapons of mass destruction requires that we pool our efforts in order to eliminate them and prevent their development and threat of use them in order to strengthen international peace and security.

Ms. Khundee (Thailand): Thailand aligns itself with the statements delivered on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) (see A/C.1/78/PV.14).

Thailand reiterates that the use of chemical and biological weapons cannot be justified and must be condemned in all circumstances. With that shared conviction, the international community must unite to overcome the challenges caused by the existence of those weapons of mass destruction (WMDs).

To achieve that goal, Thailand wishes to underscore the following three points.

First, we must uphold our obligations and commitments and continue to strengthen the existing mechanisms of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC).

As we commemorate the thirtieth anniversary of the signing of the CWC this year, we would like to commend the tireless efforts of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) in advancing progress in destroying all declared chemical weapons, and we welcome the opening of the ChemTech Centre.

However, we sincerely hope that the non-adoption of the outcome of the most recent Review Conference will

not be another new normal in the global disarmament architecture, and we call for continued cooperation under the Convention.

Turning to the BWC, Thailand supports the strengthening of the Convention, especially in establishing an effective verification mechanism similar to that of the CWC. Thailand welcomes the successful outcome of the ninth Review Conference of the States Parties to the BWC, including the decision to establish a Working Group on the Strengthening of the BWC. Thailand has been actively engaging in the Working Group's meetings this year and has been among the Friends of the Chair on the national implementation of the Working Group. We also support the inclusiveness of the Working Group, with the participation of representatives of different regions.

Secondly, greater collaboration among States at all levels is crucial. We urge States that have not done so to ratify and accede to CWC and BWC and encourage States parties to enhance cooperation to counter proliferation and safeguard humankind from the potential devastating effects of chemical and biological weapons.

Thailand also recognizes the indispensable role of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) in preventing WMDs and their means of delivery from falling into the wrong hands. We commend the collaborative spirit embodied in the resolution and encourage all States to strictly adhere to its provisions.

Thailand was honoured to co-host, together with Germany and the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs, the Regional Industry Outreach Conference for Southeast Asia (Wiesbaden Process), held in September, to promote cooperation between Governments and industry to support the implementation of resolution 1540 (2004).

Thirdly, the CWC and BWC should be implemented in a way that promotes security for humankind while not hindering the development of the safe use of bio- and chemical technology. In that regard, Thailand fully supports the peaceful and legitimate use of biochemical research and industry while trusting that all States are required to attach great importance to dual-use item control through effective guidelines and standards for bio- and chemical security.

For its part, Thailand will continue to carry out an overview of and strengthen its export-control

system, perform on-site inspections and submit annual declarations. At the global level, we are committed to the implementation of all Security Council resolutions related to that issue.

Lastly, international cooperation and assistance and the exchange of technology for peaceful uses lie at the heart of national development and help create long-lasting trust and confidence among States. Thailand encourages greater partnership in building capacity for personnel working in related fields, as human resources development would lead to a breakthrough and secure the effective implementation of the relevant conventions and frameworks related to WMDs.

In conclusion, Thailand wishes to reiterate our commitment to disarmament and the non-proliferation of all WMDs. We will do our utmost to fulfil all requirements and comply with our obligations under the global regime governing such weapons. We stand ready to work collectively with all stakeholders for the attainment of a world free of WMDs.

Mr. Omarov (Kazakhstan): We remain committed to the full implementation of all conventions for the prohibition of chemical and biological weapons to achieve their total elimination through strict and effective international controls.

Kazakhstan reaffirms its strong commitment to the Chemical Weapons Convention. In that regard, we note with great satisfaction the finalization of efforts for the disposal of the global chemical-weapons arsenal. We welcome the announcement by the United States on the destruction of the final part of its stockpile of chemical weapons.

We reaffirm the fundamental importance of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction (BWC). Kazakhstan intends to continue working actively with all Member States and relevant international organizations to achieve the goals of the Convention, including within the Working Group on the Strengthening of the BWC, under the Brazilian chairmanship.

We believe that the world was unprepared to respond effectively to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, and we need to address the gaps with a view to developing a global effective response system. The pandemic created the political momentum to look closely at issues located at the intersection of

health and security. We have operational structures to address global health, zoonotic diseases, agriculture, the environment and so on. The missing element in that global architecture is a much-needed mechanism to enforce the prohibition of biological weapons and promote the peaceful use of biotechnologies under the BWC. At present, that Convention remains the only major non-proliferation instrument that lacks an implementation structure.

At the seventy-fifth session of the General Assembly, in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, the President of Kazakhstan, Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, proposed the establishment of an international agency for biological safety and security, to be guided in its activities by the BWC. Such a step would strengthen the institutionalization of the BWC and enable a peaceful exchange of biotechnologies.

Throughout 2022 and 2023, Kazakhstan took a number of practical steps to promote that initiative, including holding a conference in Geneva in April 2022 and a number of meetings during the BWC Review Conference. Beyond Geneva, a number of international forums welcomed that initiative. In March, the Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement Contact Group, held in Baku, took note of Kazakhstan's proposal. The ministerial meeting of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, in its resolution adopted in March, welcomed Kazakhstan's initiative and supported

“efforts to enable an effective and substantial exchange of views and develop recommendations on practical implementation of the initiative”.

Here, on the margins of the meetings of the First Committee, yesterday we organized a round table discussion on an international agency for biological safety and security, and we are grateful to all who participated and contributed.

We continually promote discussions on such an agency at BWC meetings in Geneva. Kazakhstan intends to submit specific proposals on that issue at the session of the Working Group on the Strengthening of the BWC to be held in December in Geneva.

As a country with a strong and consistent policy in the field of the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, Kazakhstan is strictly committed to implementing Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) as well as other resolutions of the Security Council on the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

We also support and acknowledge the importance of the Secretary-General's Mechanism for Investigation of the Alleged Use of Chemical, Biological or Toxin Weapons.

The Government of Kazakhstan has been improving the system for combating illicit trafficking in nuclear and other radioactive materials. We remain strongly committed to the export-control regime, including unilateral adherence to the Australia Group.

Kazakhstan will continue to stand by its commitments and reaffirms the need for the global community to explore all possibilities to eliminate the global arsenal of weapons of mass destruction in accordance with international law.

Mr. Ahmed (Pakistan): We align ourselves with the statement delivered by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/78/PV.14)

The Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) and the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) have proved to be landmark instruments in terms of their positive impact on the global arms-control architecture. For decades, they have helped safeguard our world from the unimaginable devastation and horrors of other weapons of mass destruction (WMDs). Their contribution lies not only in the destruction and prohibition of physical arsenals but also in the cultivation of a global culture against the use of such abhorrent weapons.

However, the regimes established by the two conventions are facing challenges as we brace for the coming technological wave. The rapidly evolving landscape of bio- and chemical sciences, intertwined with artificial intelligence, is giving rise to unprecedented risks. The established norms under the two conventions are threatened by the potential misuse of those advancements.

The real challenge for the chemical and biological regimes would be to mitigate those risks while harnessing the peaceful benefits of new technologies without impeding access or raising new barriers for cooperation among States parties.

While the sensitive technologies in both regimes would continue to be regulated to guard against their uses incompatible with the purposes of the BWC or CWC, the control measures would need to be commensurate and applied in a non-discriminatory manner.

Pakistan remains committed to furthering the objectives of the Chemical Weapons Convention. We remain firm in our conviction to uphold the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons' (OPCW) efficacy and impartiality, particularly in safeguarding its verification mechanism.

Pakistan condemns the use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere, under any circumstances. Those responsible for such acts must be held accountable.

The OPCW's role in dealing with cases of chemical weapons should remain fully compliant with the provisions of the CWC. Extending the Technical Secretariat's remit towards attribution is inconsistent with the technical nature of its work. It is for the States parties to consider issues of attribution in the light of the technical findings of the Technical Secretariat.

It was unfortunate that the fifth special session of the Conference of the States Parties to Review the Operation of the Chemical Weapons Convention did not yield consensus. However, we take solace in the fact that we did not resort to the unwelcome option of voting to force a conclusion upon us. It is important that we revitalize consensus-based outcomes in our work in the CWC.

The BWC regime remains distinct even five decades after its inception. While registering progress in strengthening the normative framework against biological weapons, its development of institutional and organizational arrangements has not kept pace with the requirements of that regime. The establishment of a new Working Group in Geneva to strengthen the BWC is in many ways a system reset for the Convention after almost two decades. It offers a unique opportunity to revitalize the Convention, tap its full potential and contemporize it in ways that will enable it to measure up to the promise and perils in the decades ahead.

We are participating actively in the Working Group and have submitted a tangible proposal for a cooperation and assistance mechanism under article X of the BWC. Developing common understandings on the establishment of two mechanisms on international cooperation and assistance as well on the review of science and technology during the early stages of our Working Group will help build confidence and trust among the States parties.

We consider the Secretary-General's Mechanism for Investigation of the Alleged Use of Chemical,

Biological or Toxin Weapons as an important operational tool for investigating complaints of alleged use after its occurrence. We support the call for a regular review of Mechanism guidelines and procedures, as provided in its document.

We also view confidence-building measures (CBMs) as a tool for increasing transparency and building trust and confidence among States parties. However, neither the Secretary-General's Mechanism nor the CBMs can substitute for an assessment of compliance by States parties or the widely supported proposal for concluding a legally binding verification protocol under the BWC. Concluding a verification protocol would ensure that biological and toxin weapons are never developed, produced, stockpiled or otherwise acquired or retained, thereby precluding their use by States parties.

Mr. Al Ashkar (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): My country's delegation associates itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the Group of Arab States by the representative of the sisterly Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, as well that delivered on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries by the representative of Indonesia (see A/C.1/78/PV.14).

Since 1968, the Syrian Arab Republic has been a party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT); in 1972 it signed the Biological Weapons Convention; and in 2013, it joined the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) based on our firm belief in prohibiting the use of chemical weapons by any party, anywhere and under any circumstances. We are also seeking to establish a Middle East region free of all weapons of mass destruction (WMDs). During our membership in the Security Council, we submitted a draft resolution on ridding the Middle East of nuclear and all other weapons of mass destruction. That draft resolution was obstructed by known States.

The Syrian Arab Republic stresses that the fundamental obstacle confronting the creation of a zone free of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East is Israel's intransigence and refusal to join any treaties or conventions on the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, under cover from and encouraged by the United States and its allies. They protect Israel's nuclear, biological and chemical military programmes and even contribute to developing and promoting those programmes. The fact that Israel alone has acquired WMDs in the Middle East and that it refuses to join any

major treaties and conventions on the prohibition and non-proliferation of WMDs makes it the fundamental threat to peace and security in our region.

In record time, the Syrian Arab Republic has met all its obligations pursuant to the CWC through full cooperation with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). It is regrettable that certain States are insisting on politicizing the chemical file in a scandalous way. They continue to level baseless accusations against Syria and to doubt its cooperation with the OPCW. Furthermore, they exploit the organization's reports, which lack professionalism and credibility.

Those same States manipulated the Convention to create illegal mechanisms and adopt a resolution against Syria at the twenty-fifth session of the Conference of States Parties to the CWC, which constitutes a grave precedent in the work of the OPCW. The use of that organization by certain Western States as a means to implement their political agendas has led the OPCW to deviate from its technical nature and the goals for which it was founded. That has created a state of division and polarization within the organization and has harmed its professionalism and credibility.

In the light of the serious threats posed by the fact that terrorist groups have acquired chemical weapons, the Syrian Arab Republic has addressed hundreds of letters to the Secretary-General, the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1540 (2004) and anti-terrorism committees that have included information on the possession by terrorist groups of chemical materials and their use against civilians. Given the importance of a coordinated international response, we stress the need to create an effective international coordination mechanism and address the shortcomings of the relevant international instruments through the establishment of a convention to address acts of chemical terrorism.

In conclusion, the commitment to preserve the non-proliferation regime must not involve politicizing the issue, using it to exert pressure, disseminating propaganda and dealing in a selective manner with competent international frameworks and references. That commitment cannot be achieved through levelling accusations and ignoring real challenges to the non-proliferation regime. Those practices have led to exploiting the OPCW and derailing it from its mandate.

All States have the responsibility to restore the technical nature of the organization, free from politicization.

Mr. Muhith (Bangladesh): Bangladesh aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/78/PV.14).

In line with our unwavering commitment to general and complete disarmament, Bangladesh remains a fervent advocate for the complete elimination of all forms of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs), whether they be nuclear, chemical or biological. The grave danger posed by WMDs is undeniable, and their mere existence casts a shadow on the moral fabric of humankind.

We express our deep concern about the growing possibility of terrorists and other unauthorized non-State actors using or gaining access to such WMDs in certain situations.

The traumatic legacy of chemical weapons from the First World War serves as a stark reminder of the critical importance of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC). Bangladesh remains committed to the full, effective and non-discriminatory implementation of all provisions of the CWC. We strongly condemn any use of chemical weapons anywhere, at any time, by anyone, under any circumstances.

Immediately after the ratification of the CWC, in 1997, Bangladesh submitted the necessary declaration regarding chemical weapons and their production facilities. We enacted the Chemical Weapons (Prohibition) Act in 2006, formulated the enrolment rules in 2010 and, following that, established the Bangladesh National Authority for CWC to implement and fulfil our obligations under the convention.

Bangladesh deeply regrets the fact that the fourth Special Session of the Conference of States Parties to Review the Operation of the Convention could not adopt a report. We also express regret regarding the failure of the fifth Review Conference of the CWC to adopt an outcome document.

The international community must be united in condemning any use of chemical weapons, and those responsible must be held accountable in a transparent manner. In that regard, we stress the paramount importance of upholding the credibility and integrity of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and allowing it to deliver on its

mandates and responsibilities with due diligence and impartiality. Bangladesh maintains robust cooperation with the OPCW to promote the peaceful use of chemicals. Bangladesh was the first State member of the OPCW to introduce Chemical Incident Preparedness for Hospitals, in July 2019.

We call upon Member States to recommit to never using chemical weapons by destroying remaining stocks. We reiterate our call for the universalization of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Bangladesh considers the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) as an important legal instrument related to WMD. While unprecedented advances in biological science and technology have brought immense opportunities, concerns for their potential uses contrary to the provisions of the Convention remain. We reaffirm our commitment to fulfilling the provisions of BWC. The international community must work together to ensure that the BWC can effectively address present and future challenges. The coronavirus disease pandemic revealed our shared vulnerability to the potentially catastrophic consequences of pathogens and other biological threats.

In that regard, we underscore the importance of the full, effective and non-discriminatory implementation of article X of the Convention through enhancing international cooperation, assistance and exchange in toxins, biological agents, equipment and technology for peaceful purposes. We reiterate the need for the further strengthening of the BWC Implementation Support Unit to effectively respond to the various capacity-building needs of State parties, especially the least-developed countries.

Bangladesh welcomes the consensus outcome achieved by States parties to the Convention at the ninth BWC Review Conference, which culminated in the establishment of a Working Group dedicated to enhancing the Convention.

To conclude, Bangladesh recalls the need to prevent the emergence of new types of WMDs and therefore underscores the necessity of international cooperation and action in that regard.

Ms. Yoon Seong-Mee (Republic of Korea): This year marks a historic milestone in the complete elimination of all declared chemical-weapons stockpiles, which is a testament to our strong commitment to achieving a world free of chemical weapons since the entry into

force of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), in 1997. We sincerely celebrate that critical step and look forward to continuing our strenuous endeavours to uphold the norm against chemical weapons.

Despite the remarkable achievements of the CWC, the current international security environment is posing serious challenges. The ongoing war in Ukraine has deepened grave concerns over the possible use of chemical weapons. The Republic of Korea reiterates that the use of chemical weapons can never be tolerated by anyone under any circumstances. In that regard, we call on all States parties, in cooperation with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), to stay vigilant to address any possible use of chemical weapons.

The Republic of Korea is also deeply concerned that the chemical-weapons issues in the Syrian Arab Republic have not yet made noticeable progress over the past year. The third report of the OPCW Investigation and Identification Team confirmed another use of chemical weapons by the Syrian Air Force in Douma in 2018. The consultations between Syria and the Technical Secretariat of the OPCW to clarify Syria's initial declaration and investigate alleged chemical-weapons incidents are still being hampered.

The Republic of Korea reiterates its position of not accepting impunity on this matter and reaffirms its support for the ongoing efforts by the Technical Secretariat. We also strongly urge Syria to cooperate with the OPCW to redress the situation immediately.

Although all declared chemical-weapons stockpiles have been dismantled, the possibility of the re-emergence of chemical weapons remains. In that regard, it is essential to achieve the universalization of the CWC to ensure its full effectiveness. Therefore, the Republic of Korea strongly calls on the four remaining non-party States to the CWC to join it as early as possible without any preconditions.

The development of biotechnology and life sciences, as well as their wide availability and inherent dual-use nature, has brought new challenges. In addition, the devastating effects of the coronavirus disease pandemic alerted us to the importance of strengthening national and global capacity to raise our readiness against biological threats.

As the first treaty to ban an entire class of weapons of mass destruction, the Biological Weapons Convention

(BWC) has been regarded as an important landmark in the history of international disarmament. During the ninth Review Conference, last year, we reaffirmed our collective will to better address the evolving threats posed by biological weapons. While the final outcome fell short of meeting the high expectations of States parties, my delegation believes that the establishment and ongoing discussions of the Working Group on the Strengthening of the Convention will lead us closer to a more resilient, practical and up-to-date BWC regime.

Meanwhile, the Republic of Korea attaches great importance to enhancing biosafety and biosecurity by fully implementing the BWC. To that end, we have been enacting domestic legislation; submitting reports on confidence-building measures; sharing information and best practices; managing a reliable export-control regime; and building operational capabilities.

The Republic of Korea also highly values the role of assistance and international cooperation under article X of the BWC. We have been carrying out various activities to assist and cooperate with other States parties on a bilateral and multilateral basis.

On the Secretary-General's Mechanism for Investigation of the Alleged Use of Chemical, Biological or Toxin Weapons, we add our voice to the call for its integrity and independence to be preserved, and we oppose any proposals that run counter to those principles.

The rapid advancement of science and technology in the chemical and biological sectors offers promises and perils. Our shared vision of a world free of weapons of mass destruction depends on how effectively we address them. The Republic of Korea reaffirms that we will continue to work closely together with the international community to that end.

Mr. Vorontsov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The Russian Federation, as a depositary State of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BWC), has consistently implemented all its provisions. The facts that have been revealed regarding the implementation of a military-biological programme in Ukraine with the support of the Pentagon and its affiliated bodies require the greatest of attention.

An analysis of the projects carried out in Ukrainian laboratories has unambiguously concluded that biological-weapons components were being developed in close proximity to Russian territory. The Russian side

has provided all necessary explanations and presented a large body of evidence. However, our well-founded questions to the United States and Ukraine have yet to receive a proper response. They remain open and need to be addressed.

The joint efforts of the international community are required to strengthen the BWC regime. The adoption of a universal, legally binding, non-discriminatory protocol relating to all articles of the Convention, with an effective verification mechanism, would greatly enhance the effectiveness of the Convention. Such an instrument has been blocked by the United States since 2001. That, together with the Ukrainian case, only strengthens suspicions regarding Washington's military-biological activities carried out around the world under the guise of good-faith cooperation for peaceful purposes.

Russia intends to continue taking active steps to strengthen the BWC within the framework of the dedicated Working Group established by decision of the ninth Review Conference of the States Parties to the BWC. We believe that the Russian initiatives to effectively strengthen the Convention's regime are fully in line with the Group's agenda. We are convinced that it is necessary to intensify the efforts of the international community to strengthen the expert and technical capacity of the Secretary-General's Mechanism for Investigation of the Alleged Use of Chemical, Biological or Toxin Weapons.

Special attention should be paid to the guidelines and procedures of the Mechanism. The Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, Sergey Lavrov, sent a message to Secretary-General António Guterres on 14 June calling for a review of the existing guidelines and procedures of the Mechanism with a view to updating them. Many countries have supported that idea. We hope that Mr. Guterres will proceed without delay to an appropriate review with the assistance of expert consultants, taking into account the proposals of Member States. We are eager to contribute most actively to that work.

The Russian Federation, as one of the founding members of the Chemical Weapons Convention, is interested in the successful functioning of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). This year, after a quarter century of the organization's existence, the last possessor State, the United States, finally completed the destruction of

its declared chemical-weapons stockpile. However, much remains to be done to free the world from the chemical threat.

The issues of non-proliferation and preventing the re-emergence of chemical weapons are becoming increasingly important in the work of the OPCW. The problem of chemical terrorism in the Middle East, which threatens to spread beyond the region, is of particular import. There remains a high risk of provocations by neo-Nazi armed groups in Ukraine, including with the direct involvement of foreign intelligence services and private military companies at chemical-industry facilities.

The excessive politicization of the work of the OPCW by the United States-led Euro-Atlantic allies does not allow the organization to respond adequately to new challenges, destroys its integrity and undermines the foundations of the Convention. As a result of that destructive policy, the fifth special session of the Conference of the States Parties to Review the Operation of the Chemical Weapons Convention, held in May, failed to make recommendations on its future activities.

The unhealthy situation involving the OPCW is also having a negative impact on the work of other international structures. Groundless accusations against responsible States parties to the CWC are regularly heard at meetings of the Security Council and are reflected in draft documents of the General Assembly. We deem that situation totally unacceptable. We intend to continue to make every effort, together with our partners and other like-minded actors, to achieve consensus on all issues on the OPCW agenda and to restore the authority of that international organization.

Ms. De Schot (New Zealand): A core and enduring pillar of Aotearoa New Zealand's foreign policy is our unwavering opposition to the development, possession and use of all weapons of mass destruction, including chemical and biological weapons. We are resolute in our rejection and condemnation of those weapons, which are indiscriminate and inhumane and must be permanently consigned to history.

Addressing the issue of chemical weapons first, we welcomed the news of the completed destruction of the United States's stockpile in July, which marked the elimination of the entirety of the world's publicly declared chemical weapons. In celebrating that

milestone, however, we acknowledge that much work remains ahead of us.

New Zealand reiterates that any use of chemical weapons, irrespective of the user, location or circumstances, constitutes a flagrant violation of international law and warrants global condemnation. We must ensure that such weapons cannot be deployed with impunity and that perpetrators of verified attacks are brought to justice. Independent identification and attribution of chemical-weapons attacks is essential to ensure accountability.

In that regard, New Zealand commends the dedicated and professional work of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and its Investigation and Identification Team (IIT). We were pleased to make an extrabudgetary voluntary contribution to the IIT's work earlier this year. Its thorough and impartial reports both uphold the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and strengthen the broader global disarmament and non-proliferation regime.

We also underline our firm support for the International Partnership against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons, which supplements the OPCW's work.

New Zealand continues to condemn the use of chemical weapons by the Syrian Arab Republic, the evidence of which is indisputable. As we have consistently done in The Hague, in this forum and elsewhere, we call on Syria to meet its legal obligations under the CWC, to declare and destroy the entirety of its chemical-weapons programme, and to cooperate fully and in good faith with the OPCW and its membership.

We continue to urge the Russian Federation to cooperate fully with the international community and the OPCW to provide answers regarding the poisoning of Mr. Navalny.

It is also important to acknowledge the opening of the Centre for Chemistry and Technology, in May. That is a significant achievement that will support the full implementation of the Convention and preserve the OPCW's capacity to address current and future challenges. The Centre will also facilitate international cooperation and capacity-building initiatives. That is crucial to fully realizing the OPCW's mission to achieve a world free of chemical weapons where chemistry is used only for peace, progress and prosperity.

We continue to see the fruits of Member States' efforts in the lead-up to, and during, the fifth special session of the Conference of the States Parties to Review the Operation of the CWC, held in May. New Zealand wants to see meaningful progress continue across the mandate of the organization and is encouraged to see that the momentum of the Review Conference continues to drive us in that direction. We stand by our commitment to work constructively with all delegations on those matters we discussed during the Review Conference, including on issues of organizational governance.

It is imperative that the OPCW continue to have the support it needs to fulfil its mandate. In that regard, we call on the OPCW membership to provide the requisite political and financial support at next month's Conference of the States Parties to the CWC, including by way of timely and complete payment of assessed contributions.

New Zealand is committed to a world free of biological weapons. We were pleased that the ninth Review Conference of the Biological Weapons Convention agreed to the Canada-Netherlands-led proposal for the establishment of a temporary expert working group. New Zealand was pleased to co-sponsor that proposal. We hope that the group will be successful in fulfilling its mandate to develop measures that strengthen the Convention. We hope, too, that the outcome of its work ushers in a new phase of international cooperation in pursuit of a common objective: the reinforcement of the taboo against biological-weapons use.

Finally, we wish to reiterate our strong support for the Secretary-General's Mechanism for Investigation of the Alleged Use of Chemical, Biological or Toxin Weapons, and we oppose any attempts to undermine or politicize the Mechanism.

Mr. Ogasawara (Japan): Japan remains fully committed to multilateral efforts related to arms control, disarmament and the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery, which is crucial to peace and security in all regions around the world. Japan stresses the importance of reinforcing and universalizing the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) and other relevant regimes, as they remain the pillars of our fight against the use of weapons of mass destruction (WMD).

Japan welcomes the declaration by the CWC State parties and the confirmation by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons on the destruction of all chemical-weapons stockpiles, with the last completion, by the United States, in July. That being said, the repeated use of chemical weapons in recent years remains a serious concern, especially the alleged use by the Syrian Arab Air Force in 2017. Japan supports the third report of the Investigation and Identification Team, which concluded that there are reasonable grounds to believe that the Syrian Arab Air Force perpetrated those attacks, and continues to urge the Syrian Arab Republic to ensure accountability by addressing all outstanding issues. We further call on the international community to continue to unite in condemning any use of chemical weapons and in preventing their future use.

Japan commits itself to the destruction of its abandoned chemical weapons, in line with its obligations under the CWC, and has invested significant financial resources amounting to approximately €3.2 billion to cover all related costs associated with the national operation. Japan has been making consistent progress in that regard, with the successful destruction of approximately 78,000 abandoned chemical-weapons items out of the recovered 105,000. Despite the impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, the project continues with constructive bilateral cooperation and coordination with China.

Japan believes that the further institutionalization of the BWC framework is vital to addressing biosafety and biosecurity issues, of which global awareness has increased to include another dimension owing to the COVID-19 pandemic. Japan therefore welcomes the successful conclusion of the ninth Review Conference of the States Parties to the BWC thanks to the able presidency of Ambassador Bencini of Italy in December last year, which established the Working Group on the Strengthening of the BWC to make recommendations to strengthen and institutionalize the Convention in all its aspects. Japan supports the collective efforts undertaken by the Working Group to establish two mechanisms: one for the full implementation of international cooperation and assistance under article X, and the other for reviewing scientific and technological developments.

The second session of the Working Group took place in August under the able chairpersonship of Ambassador Damico of Brazil, covering those two

mechanisms, inter alia. As a Friend of the Chair for the topic on organizational, institutional and financial arrangements, Japan is determined to continue contributing to its work.

Japan is also contributing to the promotion of international cooperation in the fields of biosecurity and chemical security as this year's Chair of the Group of 7 Global Partnership against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction.

Furthermore, Japan attaches great value to preserving and strengthening the Secretary-General's Mechanism for Investigation of the Alleged Use of Chemical, Biological or Toxin Weapons as the only available tool to independently investigate any cases of biological-weapon attacks.

Japan also underlines the importance of implementing Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) as a basis for tackling the threat of WMD proliferation to non-State actors. Japan contributed approximately \$1 million to the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs to promote its implementation, and a part of the contribution was utilized for the appointment of Ms. Amanda Cowl as the first Regional Coordinator to promote implementation in the Asia-Pacific region.

Japan will continue to support the implementation of the resolution.

Ms. Udom (Ireland): Ireland aligns itself with the statement made by the observer of the European Union (see A/C.1/78/PV.14) and would like to add the following remarks in a national capacity.

Ireland reaffirms our unyielding support for the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction (BWC) and the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC). Since we last met, Ireland proudly participated in the Review Conferences for both Conventions. We call on those States that have not yet joined these instruments to accede to them without any further delay.

The past 12 months have marked numerous important milestones for the CWC, including the complete elimination of all declared chemical weapons stockpiles and the opening of the Centre for Chemistry and Technology. We welcome the fact that a clear majority of States Parties entered the Open-ended Working Group process and participated in the fifth

Review Conference striving for consensus, but we regret that that was not the case for a small number of States. We stress our appreciation to Ambassadors Van der Kwast and Kuusing for their tireless efforts. While the fifth Review Conference concluded without achieving consensus, we are encouraged that there were some areas in which progress still emerged, including gender equality, geographic diversity and non-governmental organization participation.

Ireland reiterates its full confidence in the Technical Secretariat of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). We remain steadfast in defending the organization against deliberate and baseless attacks on its integrity and credibility. Ireland commends the Technical Secretariat's work on all aspects of the Syrian chemical weapons programme, including by the Declaration Assessment Team, the Fact-Finding Mission and the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT).

The IIT found that there are reasonable grounds to believe that the Syrian Air Force perpetrated a chemical weapons attack on Douma in 2018, and that attack deserves our absolute condemnation and represents a serious violation of the Convention. Ireland stands with all victims of chemical weapons use, including the 43 people who lost their lives in this abhorrent attack. We fully support the IIT's findings, reject the continued efforts by some actors to undermine the legitimacy and credibility of the work of the OPCW and the IIT, and remain determined to ensure full follow-up of all findings. There can be no impunity for anyone involved in the use of chemical weapons.

Ireland is deeply concerned by the reported use of riot-control agents as a method of warfare in Ukraine. Such use is prohibited under the Convention. We must not allow either threats of chemical weapons use or unsubstantiated claims of chemical weapons capabilities to go unchecked. We welcome the Technical Secretariat's continued monitoring of the situation, particularly around declared chemical industrial sites in Ukraine, and we are pleased to have contributed €50,000 to the OPCW Trust Fund for Implementation of Article X.

Ireland calls on all States Parties to comply with their obligations under the CWC. We once again urge the Russian Federation to provide substantial answers to the questions posed by 45 States Parties on 5 October 2021 pursuant to article IX, paragraph 2 of

the Convention and to disclose the circumstances of the assassination attempt against Mr. Navalny.

Ireland welcomes the Director-General's commitment to gender equality and to ensuring the full, equal and meaningful participation of women and men at all levels of the OPCW. Ireland will continue to champion the invaluable role played by civil society and remains open to considering ways to ensure that the accreditation process is effective and transparent and facilitates the participation of a wide diversity of non-governmental organizations.

Ireland welcomes the agreement on an outcome document by consensus at the ninth BWC Review Conference. We welcome the decision to establish a new working group on strengthening the BWC, which will help ensure that, as biological threats continue rapidly to evolve, the BWC's work will evolve in parallel to mitigate these new threats.

Ireland condemns the fact that Russia continues to engage in dangerous weapons-of-mass-destruction disinformation campaigns against Ukraine, the United States and others, across multiple forums. We reiterate that no amount of disinformation will distract the international community from ensuring accountability for perpetrators of the use of weapons of mass destruction. Ireland also emphasizes its strong support for the Secretary-General's Mechanism for Investigation of Alleged Use of Chemical and Biological Weapons and Security Council resolution 1540 (2004), which remains an essential tool in the fight against non-State actors that seek to acquire and use weapons of mass destruction. We emphasize the essentiality of the Secretary-General's Mechanism continued independence.

Ireland recognizes export controls as central to countering the spread and use of weapons of mass destruction, facilitating legitimate trade and supporting international cooperation on peaceful uses of chemical and biological materials. Ireland strongly supports the key export-control regimes, recognizing their contribution towards ensuring a safer, more secure world.

Mr. Del Rosario Vela (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, I would like to associate myself with the statement made by the observer of the European Union (see A/C.1/78/PV.14), to which we fully subscribe. I will now add a few remarks in my national capacity.

Compliance with and implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction (BWC) are and must remain a fundamental pillar of the international disarmament architecture. The use of these forums for perverse purposes, whether to make false allegations, such as the non-existent biological weapons programmes in Ukraine, or to attack the peaceful cooperation and assistance promoted by article X, the cornerstone of the CWC, or to spread disinformation, undermines the framework of these Conventions. As a result of these actions, which we reject, the international non-proliferation and disarmament architecture is suffering its greatest challenges in decades.

We condemn Russia's unjustifiable and illegal war of aggression against Ukraine, which has violated the United Nations Charter and undermined global security and international order with devastating consequences for the entire world. Preventing conflict and the illegal use of military force in international relations, especially the use of weapons of mass destruction, must be a priority for all States members of the First Committee.

Spain reiterates its full confidence in the work carried out by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), its Director-General and the experts in the Technical Secretariat in ensuring the implementation of the CWC. A clear example of this is the transformation of the OPCW laboratory into the newly established Centre for Chemistry and Technology, making it the OPCW's central hub for enhancing its capacity to act and carry out key verification, inspection and capacity-building tasks. We strongly reject any attempt to discredit the important work of the OPCW.

The most recent CWC Review Conference underlined broad global support for the Convention and the successful elimination of most declared chemical weapons stockpiles. However, the lack of a consensus outcome document repeated the failure of the previous Review Conference, in 2018. Tensions generated by Russia, Syria and Iran caused strain for the CWC regime and prevented the adoption of the previously negotiated Working Group document. We hope that the consensus reached on the near entirety of that text will serve as a basis for further work at future meetings of the Executive Council and Conferences of States Parties on

such key issues as the verification regime, international cooperation, terrorism, and organizational governance.

The outcome of the BWC Review Conference, which the Secretary-General considered "a glimmer of hope in an overall bleak international security environment", will allow us to improve international rules and norms to prevent the use of biological weapons. We support the tasks entrusted to the Working Group of Experts during the intersessional period, inter alia, to identify specific verification measures and strengthen the Convention in all its aspects. Spain also calls for increased international cooperation to build and sustain the Secretary-General's Mechanism for Investigation of Alleged Use of Chemical and Biological Weapons, which is the only international tool to investigate an allegation of the use of biological weapons.

Spain welcomes the proposal to work towards a treaty banning the use, development, production and stockpiling of radiological weapons and encourages the Conference on Disarmament to include this item in its Programme of Work.

Finally, Spain reiterates the central role of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) in preventing nuclear, radiological, chemical and biological weapons, their means of delivery, and related materials, from falling into the hands of non-State actors, including terrorists.

Mr. Floyd (United Kingdom): This year, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) confirmed the destruction of all declared chemical weapons stockpiles. The United Kingdom congratulates the United States and the OPCW on this important milestone. The independent, impartial and expert work of the OPCW is a jewel in the crown of the non-proliferation architecture, and it must be protected by us all.

While we applaud the progress made to destroy declared stockpiles, the threat from chemical weapons sadly remains. Upholding the total ban on the development, production, stockpiling and use of chemical and biological weapons is the duty of every State, and it is crucial for international peace and security.

We recall Russia's record of recent use of Novichok nerve agent in Salisbury in 2018 and against Alexei Navalny in 2020. Any use of chemical or biological weapons by Russia in Ukraine will bring severe consequences. Admissions by Russian officers on State

media that they used riot-control agents in combat are unacceptable. The Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) clearly bans the use of riot-control agents and all other toxic chemicals as a method of warfare. Russia has persisted in sowing disinformation with baseless allegations about peaceful public-health cooperation between the United States and Ukraine.

It has now been 10 years since the horrific chemical weapons attack by the Al-Assad regime in Ghouta and Syria's subsequent accession to the CWC. Instead of taking the steps expected of all States to adhere in full to the CWC, Syria has relied on obstruction, obfuscation and lies. The OPCW's report into the 2018 chlorine attack in Douma is the ninth finding of chemical weapons use by the Al-Assad regime since Syria joined the Convention. Syria's non-compliance presents a serious proliferation risk, and its programme remains a threat to international peace and security. The international community has repeatedly urged Syria to fully comply, and Syria needs to act.

The United Kingdom was pleased with the work undertaken by the vast majority of States at the fifth CWC Review Conference, which took place earlier this year. While it was disappointing to us all that a small minority blocked the outcome document of the Conference, the message from the majority — their support for the OPCW and their commitment to uphold the CWC — was heard loudly in The Hague. We pledge to fulfil that promise over the years ahead. The United Kingdom is proud to have contributed over €1 million towards the OPCW's new Centre for Chemistry and Technology, which will enable it to take a step forward in capacity-building, knowledge-sharing and research.

The threats posed by biological weapons continue to evolve and diversify. Rapid advances in science and technology offer great benefits for peaceful research, but they may also increase the threats posed by those intending to misuse biotechnology. In June, the United Kingdom published its refreshed Biological Security Strategy, which sets out our vision that by 2030 the United Kingdom will be resilient to a spectrum of biological threats and a world leader in responsible innovation and global health.

We welcome the outcome of the ninth Review Conference of the States Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction (BWC)

last winter and the agreement to establish a working group to examine ways to strengthen the Convention. The Secretary-General has rightly welcomed this development as a glimmer of hope. We must all engage constructively, including to find ways to reach agreement on mechanisms to review science and technology and strengthen international cooperation and assistance. All States Parties should work towards early agreement, preferably by the end of 2025.

The Secretary-General's Mechanism for Investigation of Alleged Use of Chemical and Biological Weapons is vital as the sole international, effective and independent mechanism for investigating the alleged use of biological weapons and chemical weapons used by those few remaining States not party to the CWC. We will robustly oppose any attempts to undermine its effectiveness and independence. The Global Partnership against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction remains vital for delivering concrete action against modern weapons-of-mass-destruction threats. This year the United Kingdom will focus on expanding the Global Partnership's Signature Initiative to Mitigate Biological Threats in Africa.

We urge those few remaining States that have not yet done so to sign and ratify the BWC and the CWC, to strengthen the implementation of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) and work together to reinforce the global ban on chemical and biological weapons.

Mr. Jahromi (Islamic Republic of Iran): My delegation associates itself the statement delivered by the representative of Indonesia, who spoke on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (see A/C.1/78/PV.14).

We emphasize that the use of chemical or biological weapons or toxic chemicals as weapons anywhere, by anyone and under any circumstances is reprehensible. We also reaffirm that those responsible for the use of these weapons must be held accountable. Notwithstanding the conclusion of the destruction of declared chemical weapons by member States, the technical capabilities and expertise of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) should continue to be available for future verification of chemical-arsenal destruction.

I am delighted to inform you, Mr. Chair, that this week, in partnership with the OPCW, Iran hosted in Tehran the eleventh International Course on Medical Aspects of Assistance and Protection against Chemical

Weapons. We remain committed to sharing our medical achievements and expertise with all interested countries.

Furthermore, in the discussion on the future of the OPCW, it is expected that international cooperation will be reinforced. In fact, article XI of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) has played a vital role in garnering global support for the Convention and in ensuring that its goals are met. The CWC protects the inherent rights of States Parties to pursue economic and technological growth without hindering international information, technology, material and equipment exchange in the field of chemistry for peaceful purposes.

States Parties must promote cooperation and refrain from imposing restrictions that stifle trade and scientific advancement, such as unilateral sanctions. Unfortunately, certain States Parties including the United States constantly fail to fulfil their obligations in this area, endangering the Convention's sustainability. While acknowledging positive developments, such as the OPCW Centre for Chemistry and Technology and capacity-building programmes, we stress the need for an action plan to tackle obstacles, especially export restrictions, and ensure article XI's full, effective and non-discriminatory implementation.

Considering the medical needs of tens of thousands of victims of chemical weapons in the Islamic Republic of Iran as the result of the most systematic use of chemical weapons in contemporary history — against Iran, by Saddam's regime in the 1980s — and following Iran's proposal to establish an international fund for the support of chemical weapons victims, we emphasize the effective implementation of article X of the Convention, including proper support for this fund.

Iran strongly supports the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction (BWC) and calls for its comprehensive, effective and non-discriminatory implementation to uphold the current international framework. However, the resumption of negotiations for a legally binding protocol for the Convention has been hindered since the United States objected to its strengthening in 1996. To move forward, we urge the United States not only to withdraw both its objection to strengthening the Convention and its reservation to the 1925 Geneva Protocol but also to refrain from opposing the development of the BWC, particularly in the light

of reports of United States involvement in biological weapons development.

We attach great importance to the universality of the CWC and the BWC. In this regard, we strongly urge the international community to make the Israeli regime accede to these two Conventions without any further delay or preconditions. Without the Israeli regime's accession to these Conventions, security in the Middle East, which is already facing other threats by that regime, will be further endangered.

We regret the consecutive failures of the CWC Review Conferences in 2018 and 2023. It is our wish that the ninth BWC Review Conference will achieve a substantial outcome document. We are hopeful that the next Review Conferences of these two Conventions will end with success.

Mr. Thöni (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): This year marks the tenth anniversary of the Syrian Arab Republic's accession to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC). At the same time, it has been 10 years since chemical weapons were used on a large scale in Ghouta, mainly against civilians, including children. Unfortunately, this devastating instance of chemical weapons use was only one of many. Independent and impartial investigations by the United Nations and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) established in nine cases that there were reasonable grounds to believe that the responsibility for the attack lay with the Syrian Arab Republic. The Swiss Government is seriously concerned by these conclusions and condemns in the strongest possible terms any use of chemical weapons.

Moreover, 10 years have passed since Syria's initial declaration on its chemical weapons programme. We regret that there are still gaps and inconsistencies in this regard. Let me add that Switzerland welcomes the information we recently received on the twenty-fifth round of consultations with the Syrian authorities. We hope that that is a first step towards Syria's full compliance with the Convention.

Over the past year, we have also received worrying reports about the use of riot-control agents along the front lines in Ukraine. Switzerland recalls that their use as a method of warfare is prohibited by the CWC.

On a more positive note, Switzerland congratulates the OPCW on the irreversible destruction of all declared chemical weapons stockpiles. This is a historic

milestone. The OPCW can now turn its attention to other matters.

At the fifth CWC Review Conference, the States Parties to the Convention began working on this reorientation. Unfortunately, despite the constructive engagement of many delegations, the Review Conference was unable to reach consensus. Since then, however, significant progress has been made in the OPCW Executive Council. Switzerland is fully committed to continuing its active engagement, both within the newly created working groups and at future meetings and conferences.

The coronavirus pandemic reminded us of the devastating social and economic impact of a global epidemic. The deliberate release of a biological agent could have effects on a similar scale, or even worse. In this context, the shortcomings of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction (BWC) were once again highlighted, particularly in terms of a number of institutional deficits. Switzerland is therefore delighted that the ninth BWC Review Conference was able to reach a consensus on the creation of a working group on strengthening the Convention.

At its first meeting on substantive issues last August, the States Parties to the Convention engaged in constructive dialogue. Progress was made, particularly on the scientific and technological review mechanism and the international cooperation and assistance mechanism. The second substantive meeting, to be held later this year, will provide an opportunity for States Parties to discuss how to move forward on confidence-building and transparency, compliance and verification, as well as organizational, institutional and financial arrangements. We recall that the Review Conference asked the Working Group to complete its work as soon as possible, preferably before the end of 2025.

Let me conclude by stressing that strengthening the Secretary-General's Mechanism for Investigation of Alleged Use of Chemical and Biological Weapons and preserving its independence go hand in hand with strengthening the Biological Weapons Convention. Any request by member States to initiate a review of the modalities and procedures governing the Mechanism, which stipulate that the initiation of such an exercise is the prerogative of the Secretary-General,

is problematic for its proper functioning. We believe that it is up to the Secretary-General to take such a decision independently.

Mr. Bencini (Italy): Italy aligns itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union (see A/C.1/78/PV.14). I would like to add some remarks in my national capacity.

Italy remains fully committed to effective multilateral action against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery. These weapons are a growing threat to international peace and security. Securing sensitive materials, especially from access by terrorist networks and implementing effective export controls continue to be major challenges. These challenges point to the need for the universal and effective implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction (BWC). We call upon all States that are not yet parties to those Conventions to ratify or accede to them without delay and without conditions.

Nearly a year ago I had the privilege and honour to preside over the ninth Review Conference of the Parties to the Biological Weapons Convention. Despite the current tense international context, the Conference agreed by consensus on a final document. In a statement, Secretary-General António Guterres welcomed the adoption of the final document of the Conference, which offered "a glimmer of hope in an overall bleak international security environment".

We achieved three main goals. First, we broke the deadlock that had prevented all progress on the implementation of the BWC for over 20 years. We established a working group tasked with identifying, examining and developing measures to strengthen the Convention. Secondly, we agreed on a clear road map for the entire four-year review cycle and decided that no issue would be off the table, including verification and, in future, a possible legally binding instrument. Thirdly, we made progress on institutionalizing the Convention by agreeing to develop two mechanisms, one on international cooperation and assistance under article X and the other to review technological and scientific developments. We also agreed to strengthen the Implementation Support Unit.

The positive outcome of the ninth BWC Review Conference proves that with commitment and dialogue in which all sides participate we can still achieve good results. We have been reassured by the way the Working Group has implemented its mandate so far and by the constructive engagement of many delegations. We look forward to the next meeting in December.

Italy remains strongly committed to supporting the Chemical Weapons Convention and the work of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). We reaffirm the need to ensure full compliance with the CWC and the 1925 Geneva Protocol. The international community has a shared responsibility to enforce the prohibition of chemical weapons and support the international chemical non-proliferation regime, which is essential for international peace and security.

We are deeply concerned by the repeated use of chemical weapons in recent years. We condemn in the strongest possible terms any use of chemical weapons anywhere, at any time, by anyone, under any circumstances. It is imperative to identify and hold accountable the perpetrators of chemical attacks. We regret that Russia and Syria blocked adoption of a joint outcome document at the conclusion of the CWC Review Conference in May 2023 in The Hague because they objected to any mention of Syria's well-documented chemical weapons use.

We firmly condemn the use of chemical weapons in Syria and in the Russian Federation. We once again urge Syria to take all the measures to resolve, in full cooperation with the OPCW, the pending issues and ensure full compliance with the Convention.

We reiterate our call on the Russian Federation to put an end to its campaign of disinformation in spreading unsubstantiated and unfounded allegations against Ukraine and others with respect to chemical or biological weapons. In this context, we also strongly defend the OPCW Technical Secretariat against baseless accusations and attacks on its integrity and credibility through deliberate campaigns of State-sponsored disinformation.

Italy remains deeply concerned by the increasing risk of weapons of mass destruction falling into the hands of non-State actors, particularly terrorist networks. This is why we support the full implementation of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004), including by increasing national capacities in the implementation

of non-proliferation measures. We also attach great importance to the Secretary-General's Mechanism for Investigation of Alleged Use of Chemical and Biological Weapons, the only existing framework that provides for such a purpose, and which worked successfully in the past.

Mr. Talpai (Hungary): I have requested the floor to briefly introduce the draft resolution on the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction (BTWC) (A/C.1/78/L.59), a fundamental pillar of the international community's effort against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Following the practice of previous years, my country therefore submits the draft resolution on the BTWC for consideration by the First Committee.

The States Parties to the BTWC held the ninth Review Conference from 28 November to 16 December 2022, at which they adopted a final document by consensus. It was our goal to reflect this positive development in A/C.1/78/L.59. In addition, this year's draft resolution contains a new preambular paragraph on the article VI procedure that was followed in October 2022.

Hungary wishes to remain the sole sponsor of the BTWC draft resolution. I would like to take this opportunity to express our hope that the draft resolution will again be adopted by consensus, as has been the case each year so far. In this context, I would like to emphasize that by doing so the international community reaffirms its unequivocal support for the prohibition of biological weapons and confirms its conviction that the Convention is a fundamental pillar of the international community's efforts against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

In our statement delivered in the general debate (see A/C.1/78/PV.5), we already drew attention to the importance of the positive outcome of the ninth Review Conference of the BTWC, especially the newly established Working Group to strengthen the effectiveness and improve the implementation of the Convention in all its aspects, which is open to all States Parties to the Convention. I cannot but emphasize yet again the importance of adopting draft resolution L.59 by consensus, which would send a positive signal to the Working Group and to the world.

Mr. Tomlinson (Canada): Last year, States Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of

the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction (BWC) gathered for the ninth BWC Review Conference. Considering the serious nature of biological threats, this was an especially important opportunity to update the Convention and redouble efforts to rid the world of biological weapons. There was some measure of success, namely, a new intersessional process that Canada and the Netherlands were pleased to have initiated. However, the Review Conference experienced sustained and deliberate obstruction from certain States. This obstructionism has carried over into the meetings of the BWC Working Group on strengthening the Convention.

The Russian Federation continues to make unfounded allegations against the United States and Ukraine about contravening the Convention. To this end, Russia continues a blatant disinformation campaign, misusing the Convention and its related forums as a political pulpit.

For its part, the fifth Review Conference of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) was unable to adopt a final outcome document. This was largely due to the intransigence of a few States that continue to, without basis, defend the actions of the Al-Assad regime. Nine chemical attacks have been attributed to the Syrian Arab Armed Forces, and, despite this, certain States, led by the Russian Federation, shield Syria from accountability, all the while making false claims about chemical weapons use by Syrian opposition forces and weaving a narrative of disinformation concerning Ukraine.

Nevertheless, States Parties are pressing on and working to strengthen the prohibition against chemical weapons. We welcome the completion of the verified destruction of United States stockpiles. It is a testament to our collective aspirations at the time the Convention was brought into effect. The Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) is also making progress in addressing challenges related to verification, retention of knowledge, geographic and gender balance in the Technical Secretariat, and international cooperation and assistance.

(spoke in French)

Another area where we need to do more is radiological weapons. Efforts to ban such weapons were put forward in this Committee and in the Conference on Disarmament decades ago, only to be abandoned.

We commend the United States for displaying leadership and reinvigorating efforts to prohibit the use of radiological weapons by States. Although there are many unknowns associated with such weapons, their sheer destructive potential merits serious consideration. We have a collective responsibility to meet such challenges, and we are confident that definitional and other problems can be overcome during the negotiations. In addition, concluding a convention banning the use of radiological weapons would help to restore the necessary trust and confidence in one another to address other substantive non-proliferation and disarmament issues.

The work of other non-proliferation mechanisms that complement the Conventions is essential if we are to achieve this result. Canada remains firmly committed to the Global Partnership against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction, which for more than 20 years has been at the forefront of international efforts to provide practical assistance in reducing the threat of weapons of mass destruction and capacity-building.

We are equally committed to strengthening the Secretary-General's Mechanism for Investigation of Alleged Use of Chemical and Biological Weapons and will strongly resist any attempt to undermine the integrity, independence and effectiveness of this essential global security tool. Mechanisms such as the Global Partnership and the Secretary-General's Mechanism are essential components of the global non-proliferation toolkit, which must remain well equipped and protected from political interference, including by the Security Council.

Mr. Turner (United States of America): The international community can count on the United States as a steadfast advocate and partner to diminish threats posed by chemical and biological weapons, even as others seem bent on tearing down all we have built together. Last July, the United States irreversibly destroyed the last chemical munition in our chemical weapons stockpile. This historic milestone for the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) vividly demonstrates the United States commitment to international cooperation and transparency in arms control. We should celebrate this multilateral achievement under the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC).

Still, while so many of us have taken such steps to make the world safer, others have done the opposite. As Secretary Blinken stated in August, “Syria refuses to take any responsibility for its vile campaign of chemical weapons use.”

The OPCW Investigation and Identification Team’s third report, from January 2023, brings to nine the number of separate attributed chemical weapons attacks that the OPCW and the United Nations have concluded Syria has conducted against its own citizens since its accession to the CWC. This stains what should have been a celebratory tenth anniversary of the country’s accession and shows that the threat and use of chemical weapons remains real.

Unfortunately, Russia has also repeatedly sought to prevent efforts to hold Syria to account for its failure to fully declare or verifiably eliminate its chemical weapons programme, despite Syria’s obligations under the Convention and Security Council resolution 2118 (2013). We deplore Russia’s continuing efforts to shield the Al-Assad regime from appropriate oversight by the Security Council and to impugn the credibility of the OPCW’s work.

We also condemn Russia’s use of Novichok nerve agents against Alexei Navalny in 2020 and the Skripals in 2018. Russia must acknowledge its uses of chemical weapons, declare its remaining chemical weapons programme and verifiably destroy any chemical weapons it continues to possess, including Novichok nerve agents.

Furthermore, we reject Russia’s allegations that it is threatened by international assistance to Ukraine that is protecting Ukraine against chemical weapons — assistance expressly provided for in the CWC. If Russia had not invaded Ukraine, there would be no need for the global community to provide such support. In that regard, we have serious concerns about reports Russian forces have used riot-control agents on the battlefield in Ukraine and will continue with partners to address these concerns in the OPCW.

Turning to the threat of biological weapons, the United States is deeply concerned that some countries continue to pursue biological weapons in violation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction (BWC). The Biological Weapons

Convention rejects such weapons as repugnant to the conscience of humankind.

The BWC’s ninth Review Conference affirmed the determination of States Parties to work towards strengthening and institutionalizing the Convention, beginning with a new Working Group. In addition to its mandate to identify measures, including possible legally binding measures, and to make recommendations to strengthen the Convention, the Working Group will seek to establish two mechanisms: one for international cooperation and assistance, and another to review and assess scientific and technological developments.

To no one’s surprise, and contrary to the mandate agreed at the Review Conference, Russia has sought to insinuate its disinformation campaign against Ukraine and the United States into the Working Group effort and, more broadly, to stigmatize Western programmes for peaceful international cooperation and assistance with developing countries.

During this thematic debate, the Russian delegation and a group of 13 States criticized the Secretary-General’s Mechanism for Investigation of Alleged Use of Chemical and Biological Weapons. The United States strongly supports this Mechanism. We see no compelling reason to review the Secretary-General’s Mechanism guidelines and procedures. Instead, we should support the Secretary-General in ensuring that, as called for in the guidelines, the necessary standing measures to support an investigation are in place.

We must preserve the integrity of the Secretary-General’s Mechanism and continue to support the efforts of the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs to further operationalize and strengthen it as the only independent international mechanism for investigating alleged use of biological weapons. Despite the significant challenges I have just outlined, the United States believes that we have an opportunity to seize recent momentum and collaborate on an issue that could garner broad support.

The United States has submitted a draft resolution (A/C.1/78/L.51) calling for negotiation of a legally binding multilateral ban on State use of radiological weapons, which is a unique category of weapons distinct and separate from nuclear, chemical and biological weapons. We believe this initiative could help us find a common interest in the Conference on Disarmament and reinvigorate it with a concrete, constructive task.

I urge everyone to come together to accomplish this through supporting our draft resolution.

The remainder of my statement will be posted through the e-deleGATE portal.

Mrs. Kamboj (India): India has profound concern in relation to the potential dangers associated with weapons of mass destruction falling into the hands of terrorists and non-State actors. Accordingly, we support a strengthening of efforts through international cooperation and within the United Nations framework to address this issue.

India has an active and comprehensive domestic legislative framework that effectively demonstrates our firm commitment to preventing proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems. We have a robust and effective national export-control system, based on legislation, regulations and a control list of sensitive material, equipment and technologies, that is consistent with international standards. In 2022, India amended its Weapons of Mass Destruction and their Delivery Systems (Prohibition of Unlawful Activities) Act to include a ban on the financing of any prohibited activity under the Act and other relevant legislation and enable financial and other measures to prevent such financing in relation to weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems.

India recognizes the importance of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1540 (2004) in supporting Member States' efforts to prevent non-State actors from gaining access to weapons of mass destruction. India believes that the renewed mandate of the Committee will enable it to assist them in enhancing their implementation of the resolution and in more effectively addressing the contemporary and evolving challenges related to the proliferation of these weapons.

We contribute to global non-proliferation efforts as a member of export-control regimes, including the Missile Technology Control Regime, the Wassenaar Arrangement and the Australia Group. India is the Plenary Chair of the Wassenaar Arrangement for the year 2023.

With regard to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), India attaches great importance to the Convention and supports its full, effective and non-discriminatory implementation and its universalization. In keeping with this, we welcome the

complete destruction of declared stockpiles of chemical weapons under OPCW verification in July 2023.

India firmly believes that the use of chemical weapons anywhere, by anybody and under any circumstances cannot be justified. We believe that the impartiality and integrity of the OPCW must be preserved and maintained under all circumstances. With a large and growing chemical industry, India is committed to upholding the objectives of the CWC and actively cooperates with the OPCW through regular inspections and enhancing international cooperation and assistance.

Likewise, India reiterates the great importance it attaches to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction (BWC) and its full and effective implementation. We actively participated in the BWC Review Conference last year and the Working Group meetings this year.

Accordingly, we reiterate our call for the negotiation of a comprehensive and legally binding protocol providing for an effective, universal and non-discriminatory verification mechanism. We believe that the Convention must be institutionally strengthened, particularly through the establishment of mechanisms to review developments in science and technology and the fostering of international cooperation. We hope that the BWC Working Group, which has already held a substantive session this year, will recommend measures on, inter alia, compliance and verification, to reinforce the objectives of the Convention.

Finally, India is submitting draft resolution A/C.1/78/L.36, entitled "Measures to prevent terrorists from acquiring weapons of mass destruction", which highlights the dangers of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the potential for terrorists and non-State actors to exploit them. The draft resolution urges Member States to support international efforts and strengthen national measures to prevent terrorists from acquiring weapons of mass destruction.

India is very pleased that, last year, the resolution was adopted in both the First Committee and the General Assembly without a vote (resolution 77/75), having received the support of approximately 90 sponsors. India accordingly requests the continued sponsorship and support of all Member States for this year's draft

resolution, as well as support for its continued adoption by consensus.

Mr. Zlenko (Ukraine): Ukraine aligns itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union (see A/C.1/78/PV.14) I would also like to make some additional remarks in my national capacity.

Ukraine advocates strict adherence to the provisions of the key international instruments in the field of non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, including the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), the 1925 Geneva Protocol and Security Council resolution 1540 (2004). We also fully support the Secretary-General's Mechanism for Investigation of Alleged Use of Chemical and Biological Weapons and categorically stand against Russia's attempts to review the Mechanism.

The Chemical Weapons Convention has made a major contribution to strengthening international peace and security by establishing new standards for global disarmament and non-proliferation and by providing assistance and protection against chemical weapons. The Convention's fundamental purpose is to completely exclude the possibility of the use of chemical weapons. Achieving this goal implies the complete destruction of chemical weapons. Ukraine welcomes the complete destruction by the United States of its remaining chemical weapons stockpiles, which is an important milestone for the implementation of the CWC.

Despite some positive achievements with regard to the implementation of the CWC, today we are confronting unprecedented challenges to the norm set for the prohibition of chemical weapons. The various acts of chemical weapons use in Syria, Malaysia and the United Kingdom are a direct threat to the global non-proliferation and disarmament architecture.

Ukraine condemns in the strongest terms any use of chemical weapons, including the use of any toxic chemicals as weapons, by anyone, be it a State or a non-State actor, anywhere, and under any circumstances. The international community must ensure accountability and continue to take a firm stance against impunity for such abhorrent acts.

As of today, Russia continues to wage a full-scale war against Ukraine. Russian troops are systematically violating the norms of international humanitarian law and international human rights law, including by undertaking deliberate and indiscriminate attacks on

civilians and civilian infrastructure, forced conscription and kidnapping, attacks on medical facilities and the use of banned weapons. Russia is also using riot-control agents against Ukraine's armed forces. It is worth recalling that each State Party to the Chemical Weapons Convention undertakes, pursuant article I of the CWC, not to use riot-control agents as a method of warfare. In contrast, the Russian Federation has made a great number of completely false allegations of chemical weapons use by Ukraine as well as baseless accusations of conspiracies, none of which are true, and Russia has offered no credible evidence.

As one of the authors of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction (BWC), Ukraine has always promoted implementation of this indispensable disarmament and non-proliferation instrument, including through ensuring State Party compliance with their obligations under the Convention and strengthening the Convention's integrity.

It is worth noting that Russia continues to spread disinformation on an alleged programme to develop biological weapons in Ukraine. These narratives are intended primarily to justify Russia's full-scale war of aggression against my country.

Our delegation would once again like to thank all delegations that have called out the Russian fake narrative about biological weapons laboratories, which simply do not exist in Ukraine. These Russian allegations were rejected by an overwhelming majority of States participating in the formal consultative meeting held under BWC Article V in September 2022. Later, the same allegations were rejected by the Security Council (see S/PV.9180).

In conclusion, Ukraine would like to salute the United States for submitting draft resolution A/C.1/78/L.51, entitled "Prohibiting the use of radiological weapons", since we believe that it is very timely and important initiative.

Mr. Sun Yiliang (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): Chinese President Xi Jinping put forward the Global Security Initiative (GSI) to promote international efforts to collaborate on building global governance and jointly respond to such worldwide challenges as biosecurity. China will follow this guidance and join the rest of the world in continuing to promote international institutions and norms in biosecurity.

The Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction (BWC) is the cornerstone of global biosecurity governance. The Working Group on the strengthening of the Convention should focus on such core issues as the verification mechanism, national implementation, science and technology review, and international cooperation, in order to achieve results at an early date.

Establishing a verification mechanism is the most effective way to ensure compliance and build mutual trust. The Working Group should strive to forge political consensus and consolidate the technical foundation for the resumption of multinational negotiations. It is the broad consensus of States Parties to advocate responsible conduct in the biological field. It is also highly consistent with A New Agenda for Peace, the initiative put forward by Secretary-General Guterres. We hope that the Working Group can reach consensus on possible actions soon. China encourages all stakeholders to voluntarily adopt the Tianjin Biosecurity Guidelines for Codes of Conduct for Scientists.

The authority of international treaties depends on the compliance of the States Parties thereto. The international community has raised a series of questions about dubious aspects of the biomilitary activities of the United States. The United States has not made any meaningful clarifications, let alone taken any transparency measures to boost the confidence of the international community. China supports the international community in its ongoing review of the United States compliance issue in a serious and fair manner.

In May 2023, at the fifth Review Conference of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), the States Parties reached a variety of consensus. Regrettably, however, no outcome document was adopted. Certain countries attempted to manipulate hot-button issues in this area to further their political agenda, creating the greatest impediment to the normal operation of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). The Syrian chemical weapons issue and other hot-button issues can only be resolved through dialogue and consultation within the framework of the Convention. China supports the Syrian Government and the OPCW Technical Secretariat in engaging in constructive cooperation and pushing for progress on pending issues.

This year, the destruction of declared chemical weapons stockpiles was completed. While the international community is relieved at this news, we cannot ignore the fact that the chemical weapons abandoned by Japan on the territory of China (Japanese ACWs) has become the most prominent challenge on the path to fulfilling the vision of a world free of chemical weapons. Twenty-six years after the Convention's entry into force, less than one fourth of the currently known Japanese ACWs have been destroyed. The lack of information and clues as to where the Japanese ACWs are buried, together with the serious contamination of soil and water caused by these weapons, remains a grave challenge.

The early destruction of Japanese ACWs is Japan's historical responsibility and an international obligation. We hope that all parties can continue to monitor Japan so that the destruction process can achieve a more rapid and better outcome.

The comprehensive implementation of the Biological Weapons Convention and the Chemical Weapons Convention requires us to coordinate development and security in a holistic manner. We propose implementing resolution 76/234, entitled "Promoting International Cooperation on Peaceful Uses in the Context of International Security", in a complete and integral manner.

The Secretary-General's Mechanism for Investigation of Alleged Use of Chemical and Biological Weapons was established against a unique historical background. We support the Secretary-General in performing his duties in an objective and fair manner. We also support the international community in updating and improving the current operational procedures of the Secretary-General's Mechanism so as to strengthen the Mechanism's effectiveness.

The full text of this statement will be made available through the e-deleGATE portal.

Ms. Hunskaar (Norway): Since last year's session of the First Committee, we have had the chance to take stock of both the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction (BWC) through their respective Review Conferences.

The challenges posed by biological threats underscore the urgency of reinforcing the BWC and ensuring its relevance in the twenty-first century. We therefore welcome the decision by States Parties in December 2022 to agree on an ambitious programme of work for the intersessional period. This provides an opportunity to define practical ways to increase international cooperation and assistance and revisit the issue of verification and compliance in tandem with scientific and technological developments. This work will require strong partnerships with civil society, the private sector, scientific communities and other stakeholders. We encourage all member States to contribute to fruitful and constructive discussions in the Working Group on the strengthening of the Convention in the coming years.

In May 2023, we regrettably failed to reach consensus at the fifth Review Conference of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention. We remain concerned by Russian and Syrian attempts to undermine cooperation within the CWC regime.

This summer marked a watershed moment in the history of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and in global disarmament efforts. The destruction of all declared chemical weapons in the world was completed. However, this does not mean that the OPCW, or we as States Parties, can rest on our laurels. Undeclared chemical weapons still exist, and the repeated use of such weapons has been explicitly documented in recent years.

The OPCW and the United Nations have together attributed nine cases of the use of chemical weapons to Syrian authorities and two cases to the so-called Islamic State. We remain deeply concerned about the continued failure of the Syrian Arab Republic to close the 20 outstanding issues that arose from its initial declaration on its chemical weapons programme.

We continue to urge the Russian Federation to conduct a thorough investigation of the circumstances surrounding the poisoning of Mr. Alexei Navalny, share the findings of the investigation with States Parties to the CWC and bring those responsible to justice.

Norway remains steadfastly confident in the work of the OPCW Technical Secretariat and its Director-General. We firmly reject any efforts to discredit their important work.

Let me underline the importance of upholding the independence of the Secretary-General's Mechanism for Investigation of Alleged Use of Chemical and Biological Weapons. Its impartiality and independence are essential. The Secretary-General has ample opportunity to update the guidelines for the Mechanism, should he see fit. Norway therefore sees no reason for member States to initiate an update procedure.

I wish to highlight Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) and the central role it plays in preventing nuclear, chemical and biological weapons and their means of delivery, and related materials, from falling into the hands of non-State actors, including terrorists. The 2022 renewal of the mandate (Security Council resolution 2663 (2022)) was a welcome example of Council consensus on non-proliferation issues. We must continue to promote the effective implementation of resolution 1540 (2004) if we are to tackle the threat posed by non-State actors.

Let me underscore the importance of effective and transparent export controls. Norway supports the Nuclear Suppliers Group, the Zangger Committee, the Missile Technology Control Regime, the Australia Group and the Wassenaar Arrangement on Export Controls for Conventional Arms and Dual-Use Goods and Technologies. Multilateral and national export-control regimes are essential in ensuring that transfers of equipment, materials and technologies are for their intended peaceful uses.

Finally, Norway welcomes the United States initiative on a prohibition on the use of radiological weapons (A/C.1/78/L.51).

Ms. Maayan (Israel): The foundation of arms control and non-proliferation continues to be challenged by certain States. What begins with nations' general lack of commitment to fulfilling their undertakings in good faith and continues with blatant non-compliance with fundamental legal obligations ultimately undermines the bedrock upon which international stability and security is built. In that regard, the Middle East is still struggling with a chronic lack of compliance with non-proliferation and arms-control norms, obligations and mechanisms.

The use of chemical weapons by States in the Middle East, against their own populations and neighbouring countries, has occurred five times since the Second World War — once in Yemen, twice under the Iraqi regime and twice in Syria under the Al-Assad

regime. Those events constituted clear violations of the 1925 Geneva Protocol for the Prohibition of the Use in War of Asphyxiating, Poisonous or Other Gases, and of Bacteriological Methods of Warfare. There are also two additional cases of Member States in the region violating the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) that are still in question and need further investigation. To that end, the international community should strongly support the important work of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). Israel is a party to the 1925 Geneva Protocol and a signatory State to the CWC. We support the vital work of the OPCW and have a long-standing record of supporting it.

Despite the chemical-weapon disarmament process in Syria, from 2014 onwards we have witnessed hundreds of incidents where chemical weapons have been used in Syria by the Syrian State against the Syrian population. In the past few years, the OPCW Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) has been investigating specific incidents concerning the use of chemical weapons in Syria. Its reports clearly call on the Syrian Government to cooperate with the OPCW and the international community in rectifying the gaps and discrepancies in its declaration on chemical weapons. They also call on it to take full responsibility and be held accountable for its actions violating its obligations under the CWC and with regard to the destruction of its chemical-weapon arsenal. The IIT has continued its vital role, and despite Syria's lack of cooperation, issued a comprehensive report on the horrific chemical attack in Douma in 2018 that clearly designated Syria as the perpetrator. Syria has changed its statement to the OPCW nearly 20 times, and even today it cannot be considered a complete statement. It is clear that Syria still maintains chemical-weapon capabilities and that it has never abandoned its ambition to acquire further such capabilities. The regime's lack of cooperation with the OPCW's investigative teams, as well as its continued acts of concealment and deception, raises a real fear that there is a significant residual chemical array in Syria, and perhaps more than that. It is vital that the international community remain vigilant in handling the challenge of Syria's non-compliance while continuing to investigate its current capabilities and activities with regard to its chemical-weapon programme. That is essential if we are to prevent further erosion of the absolute norm against the use of chemical weapons.

Israel supports the Secretary-General's Mechanism for Investigation of Alleged Use of Chemical and Biological Weapons and will oppose any attempts to undermine its effectiveness and independence. In these times, as we witness Iran's lethal involvement in the Middle East, we are increasingly alarmed that Iran is working on dual-use chemicals that act on the central nervous system for offensive purposes and is aiming to arm the terrorist group affiliated with it with such chemical weapons.

Finally, worryingly, it seems that the international community is willing to accept the existence of such systematic non-compliance. That gap between breaches of international norms, on the one hand, and a lack of accountability, on the other, has created an urgent need for the international community to focus its efforts on implementation, compliance and the verification of States' obligations. The international community must take concrete action to ensure that those States face meaningful consequences for non-compliance. Diplomacy and dialogue remain crucial tools in resolving disputes, but they must be backed by strong enforcement mechanisms if we are to deter serious violations.

Ms. Gohiwar Aryal (Nepal): Nepal aligns itself with the statement made by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/78/PV.14).

Though peace is the very essence of the existence of the United Nations, it is under severe threat in today's world due to increasing intra- and inter-State conflicts. A sense of deep insecurity prevails among innocent civilians around the globe. In such a fragile situation, the existence of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) instils fear in everyone. We cannot imagine the devastating consequences for both humankind and the environment if such weapons should fall into the hands of terrorists and non-State actors. We are equally concerned about the potential misuse of artificial intelligence and dual-use technologies in escalating conflicts, including through the use of WMDs.

As a State party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and the Biological Weapons Convention, and as host of the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament for Asia and the Pacific, Nepal unwaveringly supports general and complete disarmament for every kind of weapon

of mass destruction. We unequivocally condemn the use of such weapons by anyone in any circumstances. It is a crime against humanity, and the perpetrators of such a heinous crime should be held accountable. Nepal is free from all types of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems. We do not manufacture, import or export any weapons of mass destruction, nor do we intend to do so. We are firm in our commitment to implementing the disarmament-related international treaties, conventions and programmes of action to which Nepal is party.

The CWC remains a significant international instrument banning an entire category of WMDs. We welcome the completion of the destruction of all declared stockpiles of chemical weapons, as the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) confirmed in July. It is the collective responsibility of all to uphold the Convention's norms against the production, use or stockpiling of chemical weapons. Nepal is pleased with the CWC's effective operation and verification mechanism and its promotion of the use of chemicals for peaceful purposes. We use chemical materials only for peaceful purposes, and we have been careful in regulating the cross-border movement of dual-use chemicals. The transfer of chemical technologies, material and equipment to developing countries for peaceful purposes remains important to us, and we appreciate the role of the OPCW as the only competent international authority in the area of chemical weapons.

While the frontiers of biological science and technology have brought spectacular opportunities for human beings, those advances have also brought challenges regarding their potential misuse. Nepal considers the Biological Weapons Convention an important component of the international legal architecture related to WMDs. However, the lack of a verification mechanism has been an obstacle to the Convention's effective implementation. Nepal recognizes the importance of strengthening the Convention through multilateral negotiations on adopting a legally binding protocol dealing with all of the Convention's provisions in a balanced and comprehensive manner. We welcomed the establishment at the BWC's ninth Review Conference of a working group on the strengthening of the Convention.

My delegation underscores the need for effective international measures to prevent the emergence of new types of weapons of mass destruction. While they

are steadfast in their commitment to disarmament and non-proliferation, the least developing countries still lack adequate capacity, including financial and technical resources, to enforce compliance with the various disarmament-related treaties, conventions and resolutions. We call for international assistance to developing countries so that they can enhance their capacities in that regard.

In conclusion, the horrors of WMDs will be a distant memory if we stand together, united in our pursuit of a world free of weapons of mass destruction where peace, security and prosperity reign for all of humankind.

Mr. Makarevich (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): As we consider geopolitical processes and the changing map of the world today, the issue of the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) has taken on a qualitatively new meaning and value. It has become crucial to the entire system of international security. Belarus believes that international security, disarmament and non-proliferation must remain among the priorities of the international agenda because effective and long-term solutions to those issues are critical to humankind's peace, stability, development and well-being and, ultimately, to its very existence.

We worry that these sensitive issues are increasingly being discussed within narrow circles and bilaterally, so that space for dialogue on them is limited. In that regard, we believe that the draft resolution that Belarus has submitted to the First Committee, entitled "Prohibition of the development and manufacture of new types of weapons of mass destruction and new systems of such weapons: report of the Conference on Disarmament" (A/C.1/78/L.18), responds to the demands of today's world. It is vital that we take measures that are aimed first and foremost at preventing an arms race. The simple logic of self-preservation tells us that we should all seek to eliminate all existing stockpiles of WMDs as quickly as possible. In that regard, we ought to improve the internationally recognized procedures that enable us to track the development of new WMDs and that lay out conditions, rules and standards for formulating concrete recommendations on types of WMDs.

The adoption of our draft resolution would reaffirm the political commitment of all Member States to preventing the emergence of new forms of WMDs, in order to protect peace on our shared planet. The draft resolution provides for a response mechanism by requesting that the Conference on Disarmament

monitor the situation and develop recommendations on concrete negotiations regarding new forms of WMDs. We submit this draft resolution every three years, and the seventy-eighth session of the General Assembly is no exception. The draft resolution maintains continuity with its predecessors and is unaltered apart from some minor technical changes. We therefore call on all to support our draft resolution, which aims to foster peace and creation, because the world is too precious to be destroyed.

Mr. Luemba (Angola): I thank the Chair for the opportunity to speak on this agenda item and want to reiterate my delegation's continued support to him and the Bureau.

In 2015 Angola signed and ratified the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction. As a State party to the Convention, we are committed to creating a legal framework to fulfil all of the obligations it contains. The full implementation of the provisions of the Chemical Weapons Convention is fundamental to building a safer and more prosperous world for all.

Angola believes that humankind would be better off if the world were completely free from chemical weapons. We know that the indiscriminate use of chemical weapons affects people whether or not they are participants in a conflict, as it harms life and livelihoods. In order to effectively fulfil its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention, Angola has established a national arms-control and disarmament authority and a national commission on civil protection. These two bodies are instrumental in providing informed guidance for carrying out our national strategy for the implementation of agreements on disarmament and the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, as well as in providing effective responses to chemical emergencies. My country is gravely concerned about the proliferation of chemical weapons. We call for the elimination and direct control of all existing chemical weapons so that they do not fall into the hands of criminal and terrorist organizations. We also call for protecting civilian populations in the event of attacks or incidents involving chemical weapons.

Angola has taken important steps to strengthen international cooperation and the exchange of scientific and technical information through promotion and participation in training in line with the Online Self-

Assessment Tool programme, which enables countries to identify gaps in their national regulations and take appropriate measures to improve their protection against accidents, incidents or attacks involving chemicals. Our Government is partnering with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). In that regard, we held a course in Luanda for Portuguese-speaking countries on emergency responses to chemical incidents, in order to strengthen and improve their national capacities for assisting victims and protecting their countries against chemical threats.

The Government of Angola has voluntarily contributed €25,000 to the Trust Fund of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons to support the project to upgrade the current OPCW laboratory and equipment store. Our contribution highlights Angola's commitment to further strengthening the ability of States parties to achieve a world free from chemical weapons. Lastly, Angola stands ready to work with the First Committee and international partners to advance that agenda.

Mr. Soares Damico (Brazil): Although this cluster is distinct from the "Nuclear weapons" cluster, we are dealing with the same category of indiscriminate weapons whose use as a means of war is repugnant to the conscience of humankind and morally indefensible. In the felicitous formulation of the Geneva Protocol of 1925, the prohibition of such weapons is universally accepted as part of international law, "binding alike the conscience and the practice of nations".

Contrary to nuclear weapons, which had to wait for the entry into force of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in 2021, chemical and biological weapons have been de facto prohibited since 1925. As we are all aware, the modern conventions constitute an offshoot of the parent protocol and of course reflect the limitations and the historical context that prevailed when they were negotiated. Indeed, with a mere look at the text of the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) we realize immediately that it is a framework convention, whereas the denser Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) is a more comprehensive and mature document that enters into the granularity of the many concrete issues regarding the implementation of a fully-fledged verification regime.

The coronavirus disease pandemic and the rapid pace of technological progress in life sciences have dramatically increased our awareness of biological

risks, which have been rightly elevated by the Secretary-General's policy brief on A New Agenda for Peace as a threat that should be addressed as a priority. In the 50 years that have passed since the signing of the BWC, attempts have been made to build on the text of the treaty in order to make it more robust and institutionalized. Lengthy negotiating exercises, particularly in the 1990s, did not bring the hoped-for outcome. As a result, today we have a Convention that lacks the structure and instruments needed to enable it to carry out the multiple tasks assigned to a dedicated but diminutive secretariat. Fortunately, the ninth Review Conference of the Convention — a rare ray of hope in an otherwise difficult period for disarmament and arms control — gave a new lease of life to the efforts to strengthen the BWC by providing a mandate to a working group dedicated to that task. Brazil has the honour to preside over the Working Group and remains committed to its ambitious mandate. My delegation would like to highlight some of the preliminary take-aways from the intergovernmental debate of the Working Group's first substantive session and from the inputs provided by experts.

First, inaction on the part of BWC member States has allowed other organizations to expand their responsibilities in areas that were under the Convention's remit.

Secondly, we urgently need to set up a mechanism for international cooperation and assistance in building capacity in developing countries relevant to the implementation of the Convention.

Thirdly and finally, every aspect of the Convention's implementation should be able to rely on a solid technical background, highlighting the need for a mechanism to address scientific and technological developments relevant to the Convention.

As the Working Group is to embark next December on a discussion of the more charged topic of compliance and verification, my delegation wants to impress on the Committee that although we can draw important lessons from previous negotiating efforts, what is needed is a focused and results-oriented discussion based on proposals. Moreover, we should not lose sight of the challenges derived from the impact of technological developments in the life sciences, as well as of the possibilities opened up by the availability of new techniques for the cost-effective verification of compliance.

In a trying year for the regime on chemical weapons, where the consensus culture that used to prevail within the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons continues to be challenged, we welcomed the completion in July of the verified destruction of all declared chemical-weapon stockpiles. That is indeed an important milestone, a culmination of the OPCW's efforts in the past 30 years. More than 72,000 metric tons of chemical weapons stored and declared by States parties were destroyed, removing us further from the scourge of those terrible weapons, which are an affront to humankind. We therefore reiterate our deep concern about the cases of violations of the CWC that we have seen in recent years. In that regard, like all the delegations before us, Brazil reiterates its condemnation of the use of chemical weapons anywhere, by anyone and in any circumstances. We encourage all States parties to the CWC to continue to engage with a view to preserving the credibility of the CWC's regime.

Mr. Lebbaz (Algeria) (*spoke in Arabic*): My delegation associates itself with the statements made by the representatives of Indonesia, on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, and Jordan, on behalf of the Group of Arab States (see A/C.1/78/PV.14), and I would like to add some remarks in my national capacity.

The Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) and the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) remain fundamental pillars of international security and cooperation. Their importance is not limited to banning the use of such weapons, as they also provide a basis for international cooperation leading to social and economic development. As a State party to both Conventions, Algeria is fully committed to implementing its obligations under them, and we urge all States that have not yet joined to adhere to them without delay.

The BWC is a vital mechanism for multilateral cooperation in the area of security and helps us to deal with the many challenges posed by biological weapons. It is also an important framework for international cooperation aimed at facilitating social and economic development in developing countries, and it is therefore vital to ensure the balanced implementation of all of its provisions in order to achieve its goals. In that context, Algeria believes that adopting a legally binding verification mechanism would be the best way to ensure States' compliance with their legal commitments under the Convention. We look forward to the results of the deliberations of the Working Group

mandated by the ninth Review Conference of the BWC, which could be an important achievement establishing specific and effective measures, including those related to compliance and verification, that could contribute to multilateral negotiations on adopting a legally binding non-discriminatory protocol.

Algeria stresses the importance of the full implementation of article X of the Convention in facilitating and ensuring the right to participate in the broadest possible exchanges of equipment, materials and information for peaceful purposes, particularly in the public-health and social and economic sectors, as well as that of biological security. Developing States should be given assistance to enable them to respond rapidly to biological threats.

Algeria condemns any use of chemical weapons by anyone, in any circumstances and for any reason. The Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons has made tremendous progress in eliminating chemical weapons. However, it has also faced increasing challenges in a constantly changing world, with new threats at the national, regional and international levels. In that regard, we welcome the great progress that has been made in implementing the CWC, especially through the destruction of chemical-weapon stockpiles. The CWC's States parties have full confidence in it, and Algeria believes that the great progress achieved in the area of chemical weapons is a result of that relevant spirit of dialogue and cooperation. We need to maintain that spirit to achieve the Convention's objectives through responsible cooperation based on consensus. We regret that the fifth Review Conference of the Convention could not adopt a final document. Despite broad consultations and enormous efforts, disputes among CWC member countries and the repeated use of votes in taking decisions continue to be a source of concern.

With regard to controversial files in this area, Algeria calls for promoting cooperation and exploring all possible ways and means towards a constructive dialogue, which would enable us to find suitable solutions for alleviating tensions and resolving outstanding issues once and for all. Algeria believes that collective work in the context of the CWC would facilitate a joint international effort, with the aim of promoting technological cooperation and scientific exchange in order to ensure the right of all States parties to use chemicals for peaceful purposes. Special attention should be paid to developing countries and to

building their national agencies' capacities in order to address the relevant challenges.

Algeria stresses the importance of the comprehensive reviews of the implementation of resolution 1540 (2004), which is an integral part of every aspect of disarmament. The latest comprehensive review was an opportunity to improve the implementation of the resolution. It is crucial to establish an appropriate balance between our need for peaceful uses of technologies and materials that promote economic and social progress, on the one hand, and the need to protect ourselves from their misuse by non-State actors, on the other. We should also establish a balance between the implementation of the resolution and the issuance of reports on that implementation, in order to avoid putting further burdens on States or unnecessary overlapping commitments, particularly for developing countries.

Mr. Edu Mbasogo (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) continues to be key to maintaining international peace and security, and Equatorial Guinea continues to be committed to strengthening it and its implementation, in furtherance of the goals of preventing the threat posed by biological weapons and of any destructive action aimed at humankind. The international community's efforts to promote peace and security continue to be undermined by the threat of weapons of mass destruction. Equatorial Guinea regrets that the ninth Review Conference of the BWC did not result in an agreement on substantive issues. However, we welcomed the decision of the Conference to establish a working group with the purpose of developing specific measures, as well as binding measures that could include recommendations for strengthening the institutionalization of the Convention.

One of the greatest challenges that we face is the possibility that weapons of mass destruction, including chemical and biological weapons, could fall into the hands of terrorists who would not think twice about using them. The international community must work to prevent any such occurrence and take action to ensure that terrorists do not have access to weapons of mass destruction that would enable them to threaten entire populations with extermination. The fight against the proliferation of biological and chemical weapons should be a priority for international action. Regardless of whatever reasons might be offered or whatever policies, concepts or military doctrines used to justify weapons of mass destruction such as biological or

chemical weapons, errors and accidents can always occur. Weapons of mass destruction are a fundamental and very real threat with the power to destroy human civilization, and they should not continue to exist in any military scenario or in the hands of any armed force. Equatorial Guinea supports the universality of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction.

Mrs. Thomas Ramírez (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): We align ourselves with the statement delivered by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/78/PV.14).

The elimination and total prohibition of weapons of mass destruction in a transparent, verifiable and irreversible manner is the only possible guarantee against their development, transfer and use. We want to reiterate our unwavering commitment to promoting general and complete disarmament, in particular nuclear disarmament, in accordance with our country's foreign policy principles, as enshrined in our Constitution, which establishes that Cuba rejects the existence, proliferation or use of weapons of mass destruction or other weapons with similar effects. Cuba does not possess weapons of mass destruction and has no intention of possessing any. We reject the use of such weapons by any actor in any circumstances. We fully support the existing multilateral regimes that prohibit the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Cuba rigorously and comprehensively implements all the provisions of the Biological Weapons Convention and the Chemical Weapons Convention. We support the adoption of a legally binding instrument prohibiting biological weapons and including a verification mechanism that can strengthen the Biological Weapons Convention. We welcomed the creation by the ninth Review Conference of the Parties to the Convention of a working group on strengthening the Convention to develop specific measures to that end, including legally binding verification measures, as well as the establishment of a mechanism guaranteeing the full, effective and non-discriminatory implementation of the Convention's provisions on international cooperation.

We reject selective, biased or politically motivated approaches to the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention. We are opposed to the establishment of mechanisms and procedures that go beyond the technical mandate of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. We hope that

a spirit of consensus will once again prevail within that framework, as opposed to the politicization and confrontation that have prevented even the most recent sessions of the Chemical Weapons Convention Review Conference from achieving results. We condemn the egregiously and intrinsically illegal imposition of coercive, unilateral measures that impose discriminatory limits or obstacles to Member States' exercise of their right to the peaceful use of nuclear energy, the promotion of international cooperation and technological and scientific progress in the areas of biology and chemistry. We reject the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed on Cuba by the United States, which violates article X of the Biological Weapons Convention and article XI of the Chemical Weapons Convention. We will continue to advocate for the full, effective and non-discriminatory implementation of both Conventions and for a world free of weapons of mass destruction.

The Chair: I shall now call on delegations that have requested to make statements in exercise of the right of reply. I would like to remind members that statements in the exercise of the right of reply are limited to five minutes for the first intervention and three minutes for the second. I shall first give the floor to delegations that were unable to exercise their right of reply in a second intervention yesterday owing to time constraints (see A/C.1/78/PV.14).

Mr. Vorontsov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We appreciate the fact that yesterday the delegation of the Kingdom of the Netherlands sought—and, we hope, continues to seek—to understand the situation involving the use of toxic chemicals and agents during the special military operation (see A/C.1/78/PV.14). At the same time, it is puzzling that it asked only the Russian delegation for explanations and surprising that it did not demand any answers from Kyiv. It is apparently confident in Kyiv's infallibility. What is that if not a double standard? For our part, we would like to underscore that the Kyiv regime's continued categorical and unsupported insinuations, yet another portion of which the representative of Ukraine unloaded on us yesterday and again today, are nothing more than a provocation aimed at baselessly accusing our country — as was the case with Syria — of violating the Convention on Chemical Weapons. Once again, they are empty words, based on nothing, and we know their worth. We have heard them many times from Kyiv, and they have been actively echoed by its

Western sponsors. However, we expect Kyiv and the anxious NATO countries, including the Netherlands, as well as their Japanese allies, to examine the clear evidence that Russia has presented — of a whole series of failed provocations by the Kyiv regime involving the use of toxic chemicals and agents, including chemical riot-control agents — with a view to blaming the Russian armed forces for such criminal actions. We do not expect the standard excuses that this is supposedly “lies and disinformation”, which we have heard over and over again, but specific, detailed expert reports.

We are hoping for an appropriate response from the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons on the data that we have provided, based on the analyses of samples collected by Russian military personnel near the village of Robotyne, which prove that in violation of the Convention on Chemical Weapons, Ukrainian militants and foreign mercenaries used toxic agents listed in the Convention’s schedule 3. Russia will continue to fight the double standards that have become the norm in the forum of the Convention, in the interests of preserving its integrity and restoring the authority of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons.

Ms. Maayan (Israel): I feel compelled to respond to the false statements made yesterday regarding my country (see A/C.1/78/PV.14). The Islamic Republic of Iran continues to spread evil and hatred in our region and beyond. No one expects that criminal and murderous regime to uphold its international obligations. Iran abandoned them a long time ago. The prohibition mandated by Security Council resolution 2231 (2015) on the Iranians’ sale and purchase of missiles and rockets expires today. From now on the international community has made it easier for them to spread their hatred and proliferate missiles, unmanned aerial vehicles and their components around the world. We have already seen their fingerprints all over the war in Ukraine, as their drones rain down from the sky and attack innocent civilians, and all over the war in Gaza, with their rockets falling short and causing the death of many innocent civilians.

The Iranian regime exports its murderous ideology. It exports its weapons. It supplies capabilities to terrorist groups around the world. It encourages terrorist organizations to fire missiles at civilians and to murder and rape innocent people. The Iranian regime leaves a path of destruction in its wake. Iran is the biggest exporter of terrorism in the world. Unstable

at home and hated abroad, it murders protesters, kills women for having a voice and hangs minorities. We say to the brave Iranians who stand up to their evil regime that they should not lose faith, because in the end they will prevail. In the past 43 years the Iranian regime has committed the worst human atrocities known to humankind. I therefore say to the Iranian representative that no statement filled with lies such as he spoke yesterday, or will surely speak today, can hide the murderous, evil and vicious ideology of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

The Chair: I shall now call on delegations that have requested to make statements in exercise of the right of reply related to today’s meeting.

Mr. Vorontsov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We have talked enough today about chemicals. Let us therefore now talk about biology. With regard to the false accusations made against the Russian Federation relating to military biological activities on Ukrainian territory, we would like to make the following clarification. On the pretext of helping to develop national health and epidemiological surveillance systems to combat the threat of biological terrorism and the proliferation of biological weapons, the reach of the United States’ military interests has expanded into many States in various regions of the world. The United States Department of Defense is using their territories as testing grounds to study infectious pathogens in various climatic conditions, monitor their spread and determine the possibility of increasing their destructive properties. There is a particular emphasis on determining hosts that can function as mechanisms for transmitting pathogens, including insects, mammals and wild birds, and on identifying their migration routes. The results of the research have given United States military biologists the opportunity to model scenarios for the spread of epidemics in specific regions. Analysis of United States strategic documents in the area of defence and security indicates that the activities of the biological laboratories under American supervision are focused on the potential military advantages they can bring the United States military.

The United States has delegated a special role to Ukraine in the post-Soviet context, owing to its developed infrastructure and unique geographical location, in particular its long land border with Russia and its location on the transcontinental migratory routes of wild birds. The Russian Federation has for years

been publicly complaining and expressing its concerns about United States military biological activities in laboratories on the territory of former Soviet Republics, far from North America and in the immediate vicinity of Russia's borders. We have repeatedly underscored that the establishment in the post-Soviet space of a network of biological laboratories that could be used to develop and stockpile biological-weapon components poses a direct threat to the national security of the Russian Federation. During the special military operation, Russia has come into possession of a number of documents and evidence that shed light on the true nature of the military biological activities conducted by the United States and Ukraine on Ukrainian territory. Analysis of those documents has confirmed the non-compliance of the United States and Ukrainian parties with the provisions of the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC).

The direction of the research being conducted indicates that the main tasks of the United States specialists in Ukraine include assessing particularly dangerous infectious pathogens, monitoring public-health and epidemiological situations, developing and testing medical protective equipment and collecting individual sets of infectious disease pathogens to subsequently export back to the United States. The circumstances and nature of the activities demonstrate the United States and Ukraine's inarguable violations of the provisions of articles I and IV of the Biological Weapons Convention. In order to tackle that appalling situation, the Security Council held consultations in September 2022 at Russia's initiative. The issue was also discussed in the Security Council on 27 October and 2 November 2022 (see S/PV.9171 and S/PV.9180), as well as at the ninth Review Conference of the BWC in December 2022. However, based on the results of the exchanges of views among the member States, we note that an overwhelming majority of the complaints went unanswered and no consensus was reached on the issues, which are still pending and should be resolved. We intend to continue to spare no effort to establish all the facts related to the United States and Ukraine's violations of the BWC in the context of the activities of biological laboratories on Ukrainian territory. In the interests of ensuring national, regional and global biosecurity, Russia remains committed to further strengthening the Convention's regime, and we will also seek to resolve all issues related to the military biological activities of the United States.

Mr. Al Ashkar (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): I have asked for the floor in order to respond to the statements by the representatives of several States concerning Syria's cooperation with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and the alleged use of such weapons. We are all well aware that for their own destructive political purposes, countries such as the United States, France, Britain and others affiliated with them deliberately overlook the fact that Syria has cooperated with the OPCW. They have spared no effort since 2011 to undermine security and stability in Syria, including by using terrorist groups and fabricating incidents involving the use of chemical weapons. Their accusations are aimed at politicizing the OPCW's reports, which have been issued under pressure from them. Paradoxically, the same States that claim to be safeguarding the non-proliferation regime do not seem concerned about Israel's possession of every kind of weapon of mass destruction, as the only country in the region that possesses such weapons.

The failure to establish a zone in the Middle East free of weapons of mass destruction remains a stark example of hypocrisy, double standards and a lack of honest political will. Military troops of the United States, whose representative pays lip service to compliance with the law and international conventions, are illegally present in Syria, and United States Administration officials have been illegally visiting north-eastern Syria, where they meet with separatist groups in flagrant violation of Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity and unity, demonstrating the destructive role that the United States plays and undermining the credibility of its accusations against Syria.

Britain's claim that it is concerned about the non-proliferation regime in the Middle East lacks credibility. It has failed to assume its responsibility regarding the implementation of the resolution on establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, adopted in 1995 by the Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. It has even obstructed its implementation by covering up and supporting Israel's nuclear arsenal and enabling it to avoid international oversight. We urge the United Kingdom, which has a long record of fabricating information about weapons of mass destruction in order to create pretexts for waging wars, to cease its disinformation campaign against Syria. France is also attempting to undermine the OPCW architecture. We are not surprised to see it conducting a disinformation

campaign against Syria, particularly considering that it was among the countries that attacked Syria's territories, in violation of international law and the Charter of the United Nations, on a pretext of investigating the presence of chemical weapons.

In response to the statement by the representative of Israel, I question her credibility with regard to disarmament. I am not surprised by what she said about Syria, as she represents a hostile entity that is occupying Syrian land. She clearly wants to divert attention from the risks posed by her entity, which has no international legitimacy and refuses to get involved in any effort to ban weapons of mass destruction, in a demonstration of its fact-free hypocrisy. Most of the Israeli representative's statement consisted of accusations to which I will not respond. It deserves rejection in terms of both form and content and is full of hatred and hostility. With a representative who preaches constantly about abiding by international law, Israel continues to commit murderous and criminal acts. The most recent example of Israel's brutality was its massacre yesterday of innocent people at the Al-Mamadani Hospital in the Gaza Strip, a brutal act that reflects its hatred and aggression.

Mr. Ghorbanpour Najafabadi (Islamic Republic of Iran): First and foremost, I would like to firmly reject the unfounded allegations made about my country by the representative of the Israeli regime. We accept that the Israeli regime no longer has a face, but throughout its history its face has been one of continued killing and terrorism. It is a regime that commits every possible crime and inhumane atrocity because the regime itself is inherently illegitimate and unlawful. What better reason could I give for that than the fact the representative of the regime is not even sticking to the agenda of this meeting and is making baseless accusations both related and unrelated to Iran? Its representative must understand that it will never succeed on any front.

Every human rights report points to the regime's brutality through its continuing oppression of the defenceless Palestinian people. More than 20 resolutions in various United Nations bodies address the regime's brutalities from different angles. The mere number of the demands being made by many States, including the regime's close allies, asking it to adhere to international humanitarian law, is proof that no one can tolerate its atrocities in Gaza. Free and independent individuals, and even Jewish religious leaders, have dissociated

themselves from the regime's horrific and inhumane behaviour. With regard to the First Committee's own agenda, how can a regime that is not party to any of the relevant international treaties and conventions allow itself to comment on Member States that are indeed party to them? The representatives of the Israeli regime must know that their hideous, hypocritical positions will get them nowhere. And if the regime believes even a little in the honesty of its words, it should first join those treaties and fulfil its relevant obligations.

Just yesterday, when that representative was making false accusations about Iran and defending its Government's brutality towards Palestinians on the pretext of self-defence and the fight against terrorism (see A/C.1/78/PV.14), more than 500 civilians, including children, women and hospital patients, were slaughtered in the bombing of the Al-Ahli Hospital in Gaza where they were sheltering. In a tweet by the Prime Minister following that genocidal act that was deleted immediately after being posted, he said, "This is a struggle between the children of light and the children of darkness, between humanity and the law of the jungle." He then tweeted again, attributing the perpetration of the massacre to the Palestinians — and at the time, not to Iran. Lies, lies and lies.

Unfortunately, the historical trajectory of the Security Council's approach to the situation in Palestine and the Israeli occupation, as well as the accompanying acts of violence, particularly in the light of the failure of the recent Council meeting on 16 October (see S/PV.9439), collectively serve as evidence of the systemic shortcomings within the United Nations. Regrettably, during the Council's recent meeting on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question, certain permanent members of the Council — who have always claimed to support and honour international humanitarian law and international human rights law — blocked the Council's efforts to fulfil its mandate by voting against a draft resolution (S/2023/772) that was purely humanitarian and aimed at establishing a humanitarian ceasefire in Gaza to avert an impending humanitarian crisis. Paradoxically, the same Member States that claim to advocate against the use of the veto during instances of crimes against humanity, war crimes and genocide voted against the implementation of a humanitarian ceasefire in Gaza, enabling the regime to continue its atrocities.

Mr. In Den Bosch (Kingdom of the Netherlands): I took note of the remarks by the representative of the

Russian Federation in his second statement in right of reply and would like to exercise my right to reply on behalf of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

Yesterday we drew attention to the issue of the Russian Federation's use of riot-control agents in military operations in Ukraine within the framework of its so-called special military operation (see A/C.1/78/PV.14). We did so because according to multiple sources, Russia has used such agents during its operation. We have not made any allegations. We have simply drawn the Committee's attention to the matter and have requested a clarification. We were already in good company in doing so earlier in the Executive Council of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). I also want to make it clear that unfortunately, although the matter was raised in the OPCW Executive Council, so far no satisfactory answer has been received from the Russian Federation, and certainly not in the most recent note, circulated on Friday by the Technical Secretariat. We therefore considered it relevant to raise the issue in this thematic debate on other weapons of mass destruction, and we will continue to monitor the situation closely and to urge others, including the Technical Secretariat, to do the same until the matter is resolved.

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

Mr. Hansen (European Union): I feel compelled to take the floor in response to the incorrect narrative and accusations made here earlier today by the representative of the Russian Federation.

The European Union strongly rejects Russia's continued baseless accusations and unfounded allegations that Ukraine is developing biological and chemical weapons. It is another example of Russia's propaganda that aims to distract from Russia's illegal, unprovoked and unjustified war of aggression against Ukraine and undermine the global norms that govern the arms-control and non-proliferation regimes. It is well established that Ukraine is a responsible party to the Chemical Weapons Convention and in full compliance with it. Nevertheless, as part of its aggression against Ukraine, Russia has engaged in a campaign of disinformation by spreading unsubstantiated and unfounded allegations about Ukraine and others with regard to chemical weapons. Russia must immediately stop that to avoid destabilizing the situation even further.

Ms. Maayan (Israel): I had not planned on speaking again today, but unfortunately I must respond to the statements made by the Syrian and Iranian representatives and explain a little bit about facts.

Israel mourns the loss of innocent lives in Gaza. The tragic events at the Al-Ahli Hospital yesterday are a new reminder of Hamas's war crimes. The Palestinian Islamic Jihad terror organization, Hamas's partner in the 7 October massacre, fired a missile salvo towards Israel, once again aimed indiscriminately towards civilians. One of the missiles misfired and landed on the hospital in Gaza, resulting in many casualties and severe damage. Some media outlets, as well as some Governments, were quick to point fingers, but the Israel Defense Forces had not conducted any operations in the area at the time of the impact. Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad have fired more than 7,000 rockets at civilians in Israel over the past few days. Each one is a war crime. Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad launch their attacks from inside civilian areas in order to use the civilians as human shields — or, even better, as cannon fodder, for which Israel gets blamed — a war crime within a war crime. Those who cruelly murdered our children have murdered their own children as well. Those who truly care about the lives of Palestinian civilians should condemn in a clear voice the war crimes perpetrated by Hamas and other terrorist organizations.

Mr. Vorontsov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): First of all, we would like to reject the latest round of baseless, purely rhetorical accusations made about the Russian Federation by the delegation of the European Union (EU). We want to once again point to the EU's observer status, ask that it consider that status and not contribute to the politicization of the discussion taking place in the room. We are very disappointed to see that an observer State, sitting here among Member States, is abusing the privileges granted to it by those Member States by making politicized statements such as its right of reply. We believe that is unacceptable.

We would like to take this opportunity to state that the Russian Federation is deeply shocked by yesterday's tragedy on the Gaza Strip. We express our sincere condolences to all of the victims, the people and the Government of Palestine. We again urge the parties to the conflict to immediately de-escalate and comply with international humanitarian law. We reaffirm our fundamental position, which rejects support for any violence against civilians or strikes on medical institutions and other civilian objects. We emphasize

the need to consolidate international efforts for an immediate ceasefire and for opening humanitarian corridors. We want to point to the immorality of attempting to politicize this topic. Refraining from politicization would enable us to provide much-needed aid to the population of Gaza, evacuate all who want to leave and halt the humanitarian disaster. We truly hope that this appeal will help to guide our work and stop its politicization.

Mr. Ghorbanpour Najafabadi (Islamic Republic of Iran): I asked for the floor to exercise my right of reply for the second time in response to the representative of the Israeli regime's continued dissemination of false and unfounded accusations, which I firmly reject. When we say that this regime is an empire of lies, we are not far off reality. If Palestinian rockets had such destructive power, every building in the occupied Palestinian territory would be demolished by now. No one can believe such shameless lies. When they killed journalist Shireen Abu Akleh last year, they spread the same lies and attributed the killing to Palestinians, proving that they were behind that assassination. The most significant sources of regional insecurity and instability in the region are the actions of the occupying regime, which has shocked the world in the past few days by committing what are defined as crimes under international criminal law, including in the provisions of the Statute of the International Criminal Court. I refer the Committee to my previous statements to it and will reiterate them if necessary.

The Chair: We have exhausted the time available for this meeting. And, of course, we will have to release the interpreters.

However, I would like to make a brief comment about the statements made by the representative of the Russian Federation with regard to the European Union's participation. I merely need to point out that the European Union has been participating since 2011 and that resolution 65/276 governs its participation in our work, which is therefore not a privilege. It is the usual practice of observers to participate. With regard to allowing the representative of the European Union to speak, the resolution that I just mentioned allows the delegation to exercise its right of reply about positions held by the European Union, as decided by the presiding officer. The right of reply is restricted to one intervention per item. And the representative of the Russian Federation himself mentioned that there are several items with regard to this one. It is therefore not really a privilege but a right that must be respected.

The Committee will reconvene in this conference room tomorrow morning, when we will first hear a briefing by the Chairperson of the Open-ended Working Group on Reducing Space Threats through Norms, Rules and Principles of Responsible Behaviours. Thereafter we will continue the thematic discussion on the cluster "Other weapons of mass destruction".

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.