



# General Assembly

Seventy-eighth session

## First Committee

16<sup>th</sup> meeting

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New York

Official Records

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

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

**The Chair:** In accordance with its programme of work, the Committee will first hear a briefing by video by the Chairperson of the Open-ended Working Group on Reducing Space Threats through Norms, Rules and Principles of Responsible Behaviours, Mr. Hellmut Lagos of Chile. Thereafter, the Committee will continue its thematic discussion under the cluster “Other weapons of mass destruction” and begin its discussion under the cluster “Outer space (disarmament aspects)”.

*A pre-recorded video statement was shown in the conference room.*

### 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:** The Committee will now continue its thematic discussion under the cluster “Other weapons of mass destruction”. Before I open the floor, I would like to encourage all delegations to respect the time limit for these statements.

**Mr. Tun** (Myanmar): Myanmar associates itself with the statements delivered on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and the Non-Aligned Movement (see A/C.1/78/PV.14).

In addition to the enduring challenges of military-based threats and the persistent risk of nuclear weapons, the international community must not underestimate the

potential world-ending-level threats posed by weapons of mass destruction (WMDs). Not only chemical and biological weapons, but also non-nuclear alternatives are emerging as existential threats to the contemporary international security architecture. There is no such thing as a justifiable circumstance for the use of weapons of mass destruction, including for retaliatory measures. Norms against the use of WMDs are strong, but the probability of WMDs falling into the hands of terrorists and bad actors is a profound challenge that we all must address. The non-existence of all forms of WMDs is the best defence against their use or threat of use.

We commend the work of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), including its recent achievement in destroying all declared chemical weapons stockpiles amid the numerous challenges it has faced over the past few years. Although this is a very significant and hard-won achievement for the OPCW, we should be aware that chemical weapons threats still exist. It is regrettable that the fourth and fifth Review Conferences of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) were not able to reach consensus to adopt an outcome document. At the same time, we endorse the call for the promotion of international cooperation and assistance in the use of chemicals that are not prohibited under the CWC.

We note with satisfaction the outcome of the ninth Review Conference of the States Parties to the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC), which has decided to establish a new working group mandated to make recommendations that can strengthen the BWC. We believe that this is an important step towards

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addressing existing gaps in the Treaty, including the much-needed verification mechanisms, through a legally binding additional protocol. We also stress the need to exercise dual-use export control to help safeguard a wide range of products and technology against being used in the service of developing WMDs. The international community also needs to actively scrutinize emerging technologies that may have the potential to make the development of current WMDs easier or open the door to new types of WMDs.

Regarding my country, Myanmar, I wish to reiterate that the past chemical weapons programme of the military has put Myanmar in non-compliance with the provisions of the CWC. A military facility near Tonbo town in the region of Bago manufactured sulphur mustard in the 1980s. The military has strictly classified that programme. The elected civilian Government of Myanmar learned of this issue only a few years ago, but all efforts to resolve this non-compliance were put to an end by the military, which launched an illegal coup in February 2021. Given both its historical record and ongoing brutalities, including barbaric murders against the people of Myanmar, it is crucial for the world to recognize that the military is fully capable of posing a significant threat to the people. I also urge the international community to carefully monitor the junta's attempts to acquire dual-use items and not to provide any type of weapons to the inhumane military junta in order to save the lives of the people of Myanmar.

**Ms. Quintero Correa** (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): Colombia advocates the total elimination and prohibition of all weapons of mass destruction. We condemn their use by any actor, anywhere and in any circumstances.

As a current member of the Executive Council of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), Colombia hails the important milestone that was reached by the organization, which this year completed the destruction of all of declared chemical stockpiles. That is a major achievement for the organization and for the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention. We appeal for efforts to be made to ensure that, as part of the current OPCW transition process following that important achievement, matters related to assistance and international cooperation are addressed with greater leadership and urgency. We recognize the efforts

made by the Technical Secretariat to strengthen States parties' national implementation capacities and to ensure protection against chemical weapons.

Colombia regrets the fact that, despite the myriad efforts made before and during the fifth session of the Review Conference of the States Parties to the Convention, held in May, it was not possible to adopt a final report. We hope that the collective efforts made during that process will contribute to the achievement of the Convention's goals. We encourage States parties to harness the momentum achieved during those discussions in order to establish forums and actionable procedures to obtain positive outcomes on issues of importance to the strengthening of both the Convention and the organization. We believe that political commitment to achieving consensus must be renewed as we head towards the next session of the Review Conference. Moreover, Colombia, as a member of the Executive Council, will continue working to ensure that geographical representation and gender equality are bolstered not only in the Technical Secretariat, but also in the activities and programmes of the organization.

Colombia recognizes the historic importance of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction to the weapons of mass destruction, disarmament and non-proliferation regime. It was the first multilateral treaty to prohibit an entire category of such weapons. We wish to see its universalization and underscore the importance of achieving its effective implementation.

We welcome the consensus achieved at the ninth Review Conference of the States Parties to the Biological Weapons Convention, held from 28 November to 16 December 2022. We are grateful for the briefing presented by Ambassador Leonardo Bencini, President of the Conference, at the beginning of this thematic debate (see A/C.1/78/PV.14) and we underscore the lessons learned during that process. We highlight the decision to establish a working group for the strengthening of the Convention, mandated to consider and establish concrete and effective measures, including possible legally binding measures, and issue recommendations to strengthen and institutionalize the Convention in all its aspects. We urge all to participate actively in the working group.

In order to strengthen the implementation of the Convention at the national level, Colombia has participated since 2021 in the project “In support of strengthening biological safety and security in Latin America in line with the implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) on non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery”. The project is implemented by the Inter-American Committee against Terrorism of the Organization of American States and has contributed to bolstering national capacities to implement relevant measures.

We reiterate that we must work to safeguard legal instruments in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, their strict verification and the strengthening of established regimes. Those represent achievements that we need to work towards in order to ultimately ensure the total elimination and prohibition of these weapons.

**The Chair:** I now give the floor to the observer of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons .

**Mr. Hong Li** (Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons): It is my honour to address the Committee on behalf of the Director-General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW).

The Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) comprehensively and thoroughly banned an entire category of weapons of mass destruction, with the OPCW as the multilateral organization for overseeing the implementation of the Convention. For the past 26 years, the OPCW has verified the irreversible destruction of more than 72,000 metric tons of chemical weapons stockpiles declared by eight State parties. On 7 July, the destruction of the last declared chemical munition was completed and verified. That represents a historical success for multilateralism. Our thanks go to a generation of diplomats and experts for their hard work and perseverance.

Meanwhile, the OPCW has been monitoring approximately 5,000 chemical industry sites and facilities in more than 80 countries through stringent verification measures. The OPCW has also offered a broad range of activities against chemical emergencies, as well as for promoting the peaceful uses of chemistry. Given that solid record, the OPCW has been writing an outstanding chapter in multilateral disarmament.

However, we cannot be complacent before existing and emerging challenges. There are four States that have yet to join the Convention. Chemical weapons use has been documented on several occasions in the past decade. The Syria chemical weapons dossier has been on our agenda for 10 years. Many aspects of it remain yet to be clarified and identified. The emerging technologies and advances in biochemistry bring opportunities for humankind’s welfare as well as challenges to security. Preventing chemical terrorism has been emerging as a priority for the OPCW.

To meet those challenges, the OPCW has embarked on a comprehensive process of adaptation. The new Center for Chemistry and Technology, inaugurated in May, has created an inclusive global platform for knowledge-sharing, scientific collaboration and capacity-building, ensuring that the OPCW will continue to be fit for purpose. The fifth session of the Review Conference of the States Parties to the CWC, held in May, consolidated the foundation for the OPCW’s future work in many important areas. A new chapter of the post-destruction era has been started. The OPCW’s achievements over the past quarter-century were recognized by the international community when the organization was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize 10 years ago.

Looking forward, preventing the re-emergence of chemical weapons will be an open-ended endeavour that will require sustained multilateral efforts and global support. In times of a challenging international security environment, with multilateralism itself under pressure, we owe the fulfilment of that commitment to the international community, to the victims of chemical weapons and to future generation. That is our mission at the OPCW, in favour of peace and international security, together with the United Nations.

**The Chair:** The Committee has just heard the last speaker on the cluster “Other weapons of mass destruction”.

I shall now call on representatives who have requested to speak in exercise of the right of reply. May remind members that statements in the exercise of the right of reply are limited to five minutes for the first intervention and to three minutes for the second intervention.

**Mr. Turner** (United States of America): There are facts and there is disinformation. I take the floor, as my delegation has several times in this forum, to set the record straight about misleading commentary by the Russian Federation.

The use of biological and chemical weapons is too serious a matter to be left to fiction. Peaceful international cooperation and assistance activities should not be undermined and maligned, but rather promoted and reinforced. Disinformation campaigns undercut the work of international bodies like the Security Council and the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC), and also have a chilling effect on those critical activities.

It is a fact that the United States is in full compliance with its obligations under the Biological Weapons Convention and does not develop or possess such weapons in Ukraine or anywhere else. All biological-related activities of the United States are for peaceful purposes and fully consistent with our obligations under the BWC. That includes the cooperation and assistance activities Russia seeks to malign. I must emphasize that Russia itself benefited from those programmes for more than two decades.

It is a fact that the laboratories and facilities being maligned are vital parts of Ukraine's and Europe's health, agricultural and scientific networks. Public health facilities and laboratories in Ukraine and around the world, including in Russia, routinely study viruses and bacteria to improve their ability to detect and diagnose diseases early, and in turn contain and prevent outbreaks and pandemics.

The United States created the Biological Threat Reduction Program, part of the Department of Defense's Cooperative Threat Reduction Program, in the 1990s in order to address risks left behind by the Soviet Union's biological weapons programme. That programme, which is still operational in Ukraine, is the same programme Russia benefited from itself until 2014, when it unilaterally ceased that cooperation with the United States and invaded Ukraine. All of the United States Department of Defense Cooperative Threat Reduction Program efforts are conducted in accordance with United States obligations under the BWC and highlight American efforts to promote transparency and the fullest possible exchange of equipment, materials and scientific and technological information for peaceful purposes, as called for by article X of the BWC.

The United States openly and transparently partners with our foreign counterparts to enhance their capacity to detect, prepare for and respond to infectious disease outbreaks and to help them protect human and

animal health in their countries. At the BWC Article V Formal Consultative Meeting in September in Geneva, countries overwhelmingly made clear that Russia's claims against the United States and Ukraine were not credible. We have also made it clear that we consider those BWC article V and VI processes to have been completed and closed. If any delegation would like more information on these issues, my delegation is circulating a QR code that links to the full facts and figures on all of those matters and has been translated into all the United Nations languages.

**Mr. Vorontsov** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We are compelled to take the floor to exercise our right of reply in order to respond to the statement made by the representative of the United States.

First of all, we reject any attempt to accuse the Russian Federation of developing biological weapons. We reaffirm that the Russian Federation conducts all of its activities in the biological sphere fully in line with its international commitments and exclusively for peaceful purposes.

With respect to what is to be considered disinformation and what is not, we are tired of hearing from the United States delegation, in response to our justified claims and questions concerning the military biological activities on the territory of Ukraine which is being conducted with their assistance in violation of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC), the exact same formula claiming that this is all lies and disinformation. We call on the United States of America and its experts to answer the specific, justified questions that have been put forward within the platform of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention. There are many such questions, some of which are directed to the United States.

We would like to receive an answer to the following question. Is it standard practice at the United States Patent and Trademark Office to issue — after conducting an expert assessment — patents on inventions that are directly related to the delivery and use of biological and toxin weapons?

We would like to receive an answer to the following question. What is the relationship between the issuance of patents for inventions whose technical description implies that they will be used as a means of delivering biological and toxin weapons and the commitments the United States has undertaken under article IV of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention?



We would like to receive an answer to the following question. Does the American side consider the inventions that we have just mentioned in these patents as a means that could be used for the delivery of biological and toxin weapons?

We would like an answer to the following question. What justified the need to centralize the collection and transfer to the United States of the dangerous pathogens isolated in the territory of Ukraine in accordance with article IV of the Agreement Concerning Cooperation in the Area of Prevention of Proliferation of Technology, Pathogens and Expertise that could be Used in the Development of Biological Weapons of 2005?

The following question needs answering. What is the purpose of designating the outcome of the work of the Biological Threat Reduction Program in Ukraine as classified and restricted information, and how does that requirement provided for in the 2005 Agreement help to ensure transparency and confidence-building within the BTWC?

We want to receive an answer to the following questions. What public health indicators have improved over the past 10 or 15 years thanks to the United States assistance in Ukraine? Has the epidemiological situation in Ukraine improved as a result of interaction with the United States? Has the incidence of infection fallen? Has immunization become wider in scope, has testing for infections broadened? Is there a greater number of specialist epidemiologists, microbiologists and public health doctors? Are there any new developments in testing and vaccines? Is there now a better accounting of infectious diseases?

What we are seeing in Ukraine in no way correlates to peaceful biological activity. There have been no improvements to the public health situation. There has only been a deterioration in that situation. As stated by a former Minister of Health of Ukraine, the public health system in Ukraine was completely destroyed. Let me repeat once again that the activities of the United States in Ukraine are a direct violation of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention because they are connected to the development of the components of such weapons.

**Mr. Turner** (United States of America): Very briefly, I would note that the main health indicator right now in Ukraine is the continuing Russian invasion of Ukrainian territory, which is causing untold death and suffering.

**Mr. Vorontsov** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We reject such statements on the reasons and genesis of the Ukrainian crisis and accusations related to the special military operation. Let me repeat once again that public health care in Ukraine was destroyed and degraded long before the start of the special military operation in 2022.

The statement by a former Ukrainian Minister of Health that I quoted earlier referred to the year 2020. He was talking about the destruction of the public health system back in the early 2010s. That was done thanks to the so-called assistance in the era of the so-called peaceful biological activity of the United States at a time when the United States of America put in office the kinds of ministers of health in Ukraine who completely destroyed that system.

As regards the questions and claims that we have raised, I repeat once again that this is a very serious issue related to violations of the provisions of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention. We are awaiting answers to those questions. We have received no answers to them. They remain outstanding. A consensus on this issue has not been reached, as confirmed by the outcome document of the consultative meeting that took place last year. We expect the United States, as a depository of the Convention, to take responsible steps to resolve the situation. We will continue to raise legitimate questions on that matter and to put them to the United States and Ukraine, and we will continue to insist on receiving answers to them with the goal of removing yet another issue from the agenda of the Convention and moving on to a genuine strengthening of the Convention, which the United States has resisted since 2001, blocking any negotiation on a legally binding protocol to the Convention with an effective verification mechanism.

**The Chair:** The Committee will now take up the cluster "Outer space (disarmament aspects)". We have a long list of speakers for the cluster, so I appeal for the full cooperation of all delegations in respecting the time limit.

**Mr. Sirie** (Indonesia): I am pleased to speak on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (NAM).

NAM recognizes the common interests of all humankind and the inalienable, legitimate sovereign rights of all States in the exploration and use of space for exclusively peaceful purposes. NAM reconfirms

its stand opposing and rejecting any acts denying or violating that common interest, and emphasizes that the prevention of an arms race in outer space would avert a grave danger to international peace and security. NAM expresses its serious concern regarding the threats to international peace and security posed by the possible weaponization of outer space or turning outer space into a domain for warfare and armed conflicts.

NAM emphasizes the paramount importance of strict compliance with existing arms limitation and disarmament agreements relevant to outer space, including bilateral agreements, and with the existing legal regime concerning the use of outer space. NAM also calls for the promotion and strengthening of international cooperation in the exploration and use of outer space for peaceful purposes. NAM re-emphasizes the urgent need for the commencement of substantive negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament (CD) on a legally binding and multilaterally verifiable instrument on the prevention of an arms race in outer space in all its aspects.

NAM rejects the declaration by the United States in 2018 that space is a war-fighting domain or the next battlefield. NAM takes note of a draft treaty on the prevention of the placement of weapons in outer space, presented jointly by Russia and China to the CD on 12 February 2008 and updated in 2014. Taking note of the substantive progress made through the discussion of the Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) on further practical measures for the prevention of an arms race in outer space, established pursuant to resolution 72/250, as reflected in the draft final report of the GGE, and expressing strong disappointment that consensus on the draft final report of the GGE was blocked by its member the United States, NAM notes that it could have represented a good basis for further negotiations towards adopting an international, legally binding instrument.

NAM continues to be concerned over the negative implications of the development and deployment of anti-ballistic missile defence systems and threats to weaponize outer space that have, inter alia, contributed to the further erosion of an international climate conducive to the strengthening of international security. The abrogation of the Treaty on the Limitation of Anti-Ballistic Missile Systems brought new challenges to international peace and stability and the prevention of an arms race in outer space. NAM remains seriously concerned about the negative security consequences of

the deployment of strategic missile defence systems, which could trigger an arms race and lead to the further development of advanced missile systems and an increase in the number of nuclear weapons.

NAM welcomes resolutions 77/40, on the prevention of an arms race in outer space, and 77/42, on no first placement of weapons in outer space, both of which reaffirmed the importance and urgency of the objective of preventing an arms race in outer space and the willingness of all States to contribute to reaching that common goal, as well as resolution 77/251, on transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities, which reaffirms that preventing an arms race in outer space is in the interest of maintaining international peace and security.

NAM underscores that while voluntary trust- and confidence-building measures (TCBMs) partially contribute to reducing mistrust and enhancing the safety of outer space operations in the short term, they can be neither a substitute nor a precondition for the early conclusion of a legally binding instrument on the prevention of an arms race in outer space, including the prohibition of the placement of any weapons in outer space, as well as the threat or use of force against outer space objects. In that regard, NAM welcomes the adoption of the recommendations to promote the practical implementation of TCBMs in outer space activities with the goal of preventing an arms race in outer space, in conformity with the recommendation set out in the report of the GGE on further effective measures for the prevention of an arms race in outer space at the 2023 substantive session of the United Nations Disarmament Commission.

NAM calls upon all States, in particular those with major space capabilities, to contribute actively to the peaceful use of outer space and to the prevention of an arms race in outer space, and to refrain from actions contrary to that objective. NAM strongly urges States to refrain from any unilateral, coercive measures that are in contravention of international law and could impede or prevent space activities for peaceful purposes by developing countries and the full, effective and non-discriminatory implementation of the principles and treaties governing international space law. NAM continues to reaffirm the need for a universal, comprehensive and non-discriminatory multilateral approach towards the issue of missiles in all its aspects, negotiated multilaterally within the United Nations. Any initiative on that subject should take into account the security concerns of all States and their inherent right to the peaceful uses of space technology.

**Mr. Mahmud** (Nigeria): I speak on behalf of the Group of African States. The African Group aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and wishes to make the following remarks.

Outer space and celestial bodies must continue to be regarded and safeguarded as the common heritage of humankind and must be used, explored and utilized for peaceful purposes for the benefit and interests of all Member States, irrespective of their social, economic and scientific development. The African Group stresses the importance of the prevention of an arms race in outer space through a legally binding instrument that would complement the international legal framework in a manner that allows for the equal exploration of outer space based on the principle of the non-appropriation and peaceful use of outer space, in conformity with the five United Nations treaties governing space activities.

The group welcomed resolutions 76/22, on the prevention of an arms race in outer space, and 76/23, on no first placement of weapons in outer space. Both of those reaffirm the importance and urgency of the objectives of preventing an arms race in outer space and the willingness of all States to contribute to reaching that common goal. We also welcome resolution 73/72, on transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities, which reaffirms that preventing an arms race in outer space is in the interest of maintaining international peace and security. In that context, the Group unequivocally wishes to stress the urgent need for our planet, including outer space, to be free of nuclear weapons, weapons of mass destruction and, indeed, all other kinds of weapons, as their presence constitutes an essential threat to global peace and the survival of humankind.

The African Group underscores the paramount importance of strict compliance with existing arms limitation and disarmament agreements relevant to outer space, including bilateral agreements, and with the existing legal regime concerning the use of outer space. The Group also calls for the promotion and strengthening of international cooperation in the exploration and use of outer space for peaceful purposes.

The Group emphasizes the urgent need for the commencement of substantive negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament on a legally binding and multilaterally verifiable instrument on the prevention of an arms race in outer space in all its aspects. The

African Group recalls the adoption of the African Space Policy and Strategy in 2016 and regards them as an important policy framework towards the realization of an African outer space programme within the framework of Agenda 2063 of the African Union. The Group also recalls the establishment of the African Space Agency and reiterates that the immense potential of space technology and applications should be equally beneficial to all Member States. On that note, the African Group calls on the United Nations to promote the equal and non-discriminatory access to outer space of all nations.

The Group also stresses the importance of the international legal framework that allows for the equal exploration of outer space based on the principle of non-appropriation and peaceful use, in conformity with the five United Nations treaties governing space activities, in particular the 1967 Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies. The African Group maintains that the recommendations of the Group of Governmental Experts on Transparency and Confidence-Building Measures in Outer Space activities continue to represent an important contribution towards maintaining outer space for peaceful purposes. The intentional creation of space debris arising from the deliberate destruction of space systems represents a major concern to the African Group, due to its consequences for the future exploration and use of outer space. Therefore, the mitigation of space debris and the prohibition of their intentional creation through the deliberate destruction of space systems should be among the priorities of the work of the United Nations. Challenges related to space activities, in particular space debris, should be addressed in a way that will not jeopardize the development of the peaceful space capabilities of developing countries.

**Mr. Muhamad** (Malaysia): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the States members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

ASEAN reiterates that access to outer space is an inalienable right of all States and that the use of outer space should be exclusively for peaceful purposes and for the collective benefit of humankind. All activities in outer space must be conducted in accordance with international law and the principle of the non-appropriation of outer space. We reaffirm the vital importance of preventing an arms race in outer space and the weaponization of outer space. In that regard,

the full implementation of all related United Nations instruments and relevant General Assembly resolutions is critical.

ASEAN remains seriously concerned over threats to international peace and security posed by the possible weaponization of outer space or the conversion of outer space into a domain for warfare and armed conflict. We reiterate the urgent need for the commencement of substantive negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament on a legally binding and multilaterally verifiable instrument on the prevention of an arms race in outer space, including the prohibition of the placement of weapons in outer space and the prohibition of the threat or use of force against outer space objects.

In the interest of ensuring the peaceful use and exploration of outer space, the General Assembly should continue to play a key role in fostering dialogue and action on current issues and challenges in that field. ASEAN welcomes the convening of the substantive session of the United Nations Disarmament Commission in April, which resulted in a consensus outcome relating to transparency and confidence-building measures on the prevention of an arms race in outer space.

ASEAN regrets that despite the constructive engagement of member States, the Open-ended Working Group (OEWG) on Reducing Space Threats through Norms, Rules and Principles of Responsible Behaviours, established pursuant to resolution 76/231, was not able to adopt a substantive or procedural outcome. We believe that the OEWG is an important platform for reaching a common understanding on how best to act to reduce threats to space systems in order to maintain outer space as a peaceful, safe, stable and sustainable environment free from an arms race and conflict, for the benefit of all. The work we have done in the OEWG is an excellent starting point that complements other efforts related to enhancing outer space security, including the new Group of Governmental Experts on further practical measures for the prevention of an arms race in outer space, established pursuant to resolution 77/250 to consider and make recommendations on substantial elements of an international, legally binding instrument on the prevention of an arms race in outer space, including, inter alia, the prevention of the placement of weapons in outer space.

ASEAN calls for an open, inclusive, transparent, sustainable and flexible process for discussions on outer space. In that regard, ASEAN is concerned about

proposals to establish parallel processes on the same topic, which would be challenging, especially for small and developing States with limited resources. ASEAN urges Member States to engage in meaningful dialogue to avoid parallel processes. We underscore the role of the Sub-Committee on Space Technology and Applications, a subcommittee of the ASEAN Committee on Science, Technology and Innovation that serves as a platform to formulate and coordinate collaborative and cooperative programmes and projects on space, science and technology. We also support other activities and initiatives that help deepen understanding on issues pertaining to space security. In that connection, the ASEAN Regional Forum has made contributions in our region by organizing space security workshops.

ASEAN recognizes the significant progress made by the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space and the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs in promoting international cooperation on the peaceful uses of outer space. ASEAN further reaffirms the need for a universal, comprehensive and non-discriminatory multilateral approach towards the issue of missiles in all its aspects, negotiated multilaterally within the United Nations. Any initiative on that subject should take into account the security concerns of all States and their inherent right to the peaceful uses of space technologies.

We maintain our call for continued action in mitigating the effects of space debris through relevant multilateral forums, and we stand ready to engage with all parties in moving that agenda forward.

Activities in outer space should not remain the exclusive preserve of a small group of States. Therefore, ASEAN encourages the strengthening of capacity-building programmes, with particular emphasis on developing countries, to ensure that outer space is, both in principle and in practice, a common heritage of humankind that all States can avail themselves of.

**Mr. Alqaisi (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*):** At the outset, on behalf of the Group of Arab States, I condemn the brutal Israeli aggression against the Gaza Strip and the massacres that have been and continue to be committed by Israel against the Palestinian people. The Arab Group calls for an immediate ceasefire in the Gaza Strip and the entry of basic humanitarian and medical assistance, as well as for stopping the forced displacement of Palestinians.

Turning to our thematic debate today, the Arab Group associates itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.



The Arab Group believes in the importance of using outer space exclusively for peaceful purposes. We must ban all types of armaments and armed conflict in outer space. The international conventions currently in force have played a positive role in promoting the peaceful use of outer space and regulating activities therein. However, those conventions must be updated to match recent developments, especially the announcement by certain countries of their intention to develop their abilities either to place weapons in outer space or to launch armed attacks against satellites and other assets in outer space. In that regard, we stress that Arab priorities in that regard are based on the following premises.

First, outer space is a global commons of humankind. Thus, all activities in outer space must be codified under the umbrella of the United Nations to ensure the principles of universality and comprehensiveness. Ensuring international consensus on that vital issue requires an international, legally binding instrument that would prevent any arms race in outer space.

Secondly, any attempt to regulate activities in outer space must be aimed at maintaining the interests of all nations. It should not lead to any obstruction of countries' inherent right to use outer space for peaceful and legitimate purposes that are not related to armament.

Thirdly, the Arab Group underlines the need to maintain outer space as a peaceful domain free from conflicts. Thus, the desired binding international instrument on the prevention of an arms race in outer space must include a ban on the placement of offensive or defensive weapons in space and on any armed attack on objects therein or deliberate harm to them. We must also ban the development or testing of any arms or technologies whose sole objective is to carry out armed attacks against objects in outer space. We must establish the measures and mechanisms necessary to verify such commitments in a multilateral context.

Fourthly, we reiterate the importance of promoting international cooperation in the peaceful use of outer space. We must include developing countries among those using and benefiting from space activities and applications. On that basis, the Arab Group takes note of the progress achieved in the thematic discussions of the Group of Governmental Experts on further effective measures for the prevention of an arms race in outer space, which will make a useful contribution to any future negotiations on that matter. The Arab Group welcomes

the establishment of the Group of Governmental Experts to consider and make recommendations on substantial elements of an international legally binding instrument in that context, which will help to build on the relevant negotiations. The Arab Group looks forward to seeing positive contributions from all parties to the work of the Group, which will start its meetings next month.

The Arab Group also takes note of the consultations held in the context of the Open-ended Working Group on Reducing Space Threats through Norms, Rules and Principles of Responsible Behaviours, established pursuant to resolution 76/231. We also take note of the Working Group's draft final report. The Arab Group regrets the fact that the Working Group failed to adopt the report in a way that would take the concerns of all parties into consideration.

In conclusion, the Arab Group welcomes the consensus adoption by the United Nations Disarmament Commission of recommendations on the practical implementation of transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities to prevent an arms race therein. We look forward to the implementation of those recommendations by all States.

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

**Ms. Claey's** (European Union): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU). Türkiye, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Albania, Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iceland, Andorra, Monaco and San Marino align themselves with this statement.

The EU and its member States are actively engaged in promoting the preservation of a safe, secure and sustainable space environment and the peaceful use of outer space on an equitable and mutually acceptable basis for all present and future generations. We remain strongly committed to the prevention of an arms race in outer space, which is essential for strengthening international security and stability and for safeguarding the free exploration and long-term use of the space environment for peaceful purposes. International law — in particular the Charter of the United Nations, the United Nations treaties on outer space and international humanitarian law — is applicable to outer space.

Improving space security today is paramount, as all States, be they spacefaring nations or not, are increasingly reliant on space systems and services.

The goal of preventing an arms race in outer space is achievable through a combination of legally binding and politically binding tools. While reaffirming the importance of developing legally binding norms in that field, the EU and its member States believe that an approach based on behaviours is the most pragmatic and immediate way forward to make progress on the prevention of an arms race in outer space and improve space security. That approach complements the relevant disarmament and arms control tools and helps to further strengthen the existing normative and legal framework. Future legally binding frameworks for space security must be effective and verifiable and should be aimed at covering all relevant threats.

The EU and its member States fully support the Open-ended Working Group (OEWG) on Reducing Space Threats through Norms, Rules and Principles of Responsible Behaviours. The EU and its member States deeply regret that, in spite of all the tireless efforts of the Chair and the support of the overwhelming majority of States, the OEWG was unable to adopt a consensual, substantive report. The unwillingness of one member State to agree even on a procedural report shows disregard for the mandate of the OEWG given by the General Assembly.

At the same time, we welcome the active engagement demonstrated during that process, and particularly the joint statements and cross-regional initiatives. The EU also welcomes the draft resolution proposed by the United Kingdom to establish a new OEWG in order to continue that work and further elaborate the concept in a timely manner. The EU reiterates the importance of a multi-stakeholder approach, including engagement with international organizations, commercial actors and civil society representatives, in accordance with established practice.

Historically, many legally binding instruments on outer space and other domains drew from previous non-legally binding commitments and the adoption of different resolutions in the United Nations framework. We reiterate that agreeing on norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviours represents a viable way to achieve the goal of preventing an arms race in outer space. It is a first, important step towards maintaining space security, contributing to increased international cooperation, facilitating equitable access to outer space and contributing to increased transparency and confidence in the conduct of space activities.

In that light, we welcome the publication by the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) of a lexicon for outer space security that supports this effort. The usefulness of such an approach is demonstrated by the national commitments made by an increasing number of Member States not to conduct destructive direct-ascent anti-satellite missile tests, pursuant to resolution 77/41. In that context, I am honoured to reaffirm today the commitment of all States members of the European Union not to conduct destructive direct-ascent anti-satellite missile tests. We encourage all States to make such a commitment, which could contribute to building the necessary confidence among States towards the development of legally binding instruments in the scope of space security in the future and contribute further to our overarching goal of preventing an arms race in outer space.

Trust and confidence are at the centre of any security-building process. In that regard, the EU welcomes the work of Working Group II of the United Nations Disarmament Commission in promoting the practical implementation of transparency and confidence-building measures (TCBMs) in outer space and the adoption of its recommendations by consensus. TCBMs allow for norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviours to develop in a favourable strategic environment. In that regard, we strongly support the implementation of TCBMs discussed and agreed upon in the 2013 report of the Group of Governmental Experts on Transparency and Confidence-Building Measures in Outer Space Activities (A/68/189), and we welcome the new report of the Secretary-General on their implementation.

We wish to highlight that in order to ensure the transparency of EU space activities and intentions, a joint communication by the European Commission and the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy on the EU Space Strategy for Security and Defence was issued and made public in March and will be endorsed by the Council of the European Union very soon. It is also available on the UNIDIR space security portal.

Furthermore, sharing information on space launch vehicle programmes, including pre-launch notifications, is already established practice under The Hague Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missiles Proliferation. The EU and its member States encourage all States to subscribe to The Hague Code of Conduct and to fully implement its provisions.

Finally, as firm believers in multilateralism with the United Nations at its core, we strongly believe that it is now urgent and in the interest of and for the benefit of all States to agree on a global, common and multilateral solution for space security and to enhance coordination and cooperation. The EU and its member States continue to be fully committed to engaging actively and constructively in discussions on responsible behaviours, with the aim of preventing an arms race in outer space.

**Mr. Vorontsov** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Russia has consistently advocated preserving outer space as a domain for the exclusively peaceful activity of all States on an equal basis. However, the risks of outer space being made a springboard for aggression and war have recently become very real. The policy of the United States and a number of Western States aimed at placing weapons in outer space, increasing potential for the use of force against space objects and using outer space for combat operations continues to undermine international peace and security.

We emphasize a very dangerous trend that has become quite clear in the course of events in Ukraine. I am referring to the fact that the United States and its allies are using components of civilian infrastructure, including commercial infrastructure, for military purposes in outer space. Let me repeat for those who do not understand that quasi-civilian infrastructure could become a legitimate target for retaliation.

As a result of the reckless actions of Western States, there is now an unjustified threat to the sustainability of peaceful outer space activities, as well as many socioeconomic processes on Earth that affect the well-being of people, first and foremost in developing countries. At the very least, such a provocative use of civilian satellites gives rise to questions within the context of the Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies, which provides for the exclusively peaceful use of outer space. That should be most strongly condemned by the international community.

Against that background, there is a growing need for initiatives to maintain outer space for exploration and use for exclusively peaceful purposes, to prevent an arms race in outer space and to launch relevant negotiations within the framework of the 1967 Outer Space Treaty, as provided for in the decisions adopted at the first

special session on disarmament in 1978. Commitments are needed at the national and international levels to ensure that no weapons of any type are placed in outer space, including in orbit around the Earth and on celestial bodies, and to prohibit the use or threat of use of force against or by means of space objects.

We welcome the upcoming resumption of the Group of Governmental Experts on further effective measures for the prevention of an arms race in outer space, established pursuant to resolution 77/250, to consider and make recommendations on substantial elements of an international legally binding instrument on the prevention of an arms race in outer space, including, *inter alia*, on the prevention of the placement of weapons in outer space. We expect the Group of Governmental Experts to succeed in agreeing on a substantive report.

We welcome the outcome of the work of the United Nations Disarmament Commission, which achieved consensus this year on recommendations to promote the practical implementation of transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities in order to prevent an arms race in outer space. The only effective transparency and confidence-building measure to prevent the placement of weapons in outer space is and remains the international initiative/political commitment to no first placement of weapons in outer space. More than 30 States have already become full-fledged participants, and their number keeps growing steadily.

It is also important to ensure that the discussion of issues under the mandate of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space is not shifted to other forums. We underscore that any attempt to move issues related to the international legal basis for peaceful outer space activities beyond that unique intergovernmental forum will undermine the fundamental role played by the Committee, as enshrined in the decisions of the General Assembly.

The Russian Federation is submitting to the consideration of the First Committee draft resolutions on no first placement of weapons in outer space, transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities, and further practical measures for the prevention of an arms race in outer space. Our draft resolutions are aimed at consolidating the discussion on the prevention of an arms race in outer space and developing a unifying agenda. We call on all States to support and co-sponsor these draft resolutions.

**Ms. Sinaga** (Indonesia): Indonesia aligns itself with the statements delivered on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

It is our long-standing view that outer space shall be used, explored, and utilized only for peaceful purposes. The notion of peaceful purposes must encompass the prevention of an arms race in outer space. Any weaponization and militarization of outer space will run counter to our objective to prevent an arms race in outer space and therefore must be given greater attention. Against that backdrop, there are three points we would like to share.

First, we must address threats to outer space in a comprehensive manner. Our existing international regimes on outer space are inadequate to deter the militarization and weaponization of outer space. Therefore, we call for the immediate negotiation and conclusion in the Conference on Disarmament of a legally binding international instrument on the prevention of an arms race in outer space in all its aspects. We believe that such an instrument would lead to the prevention of the increasing risks and threats to outer space.

Secondly, we need to maintain outer space as a peaceful, safe, stable, secure and sustainable environment. The development of norms, rules and responsible behaviours could be part of achieving that objective. Those norms, rules and responsible behaviours should serve as building blocks towards the prevention of arms race. The elaboration of the norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviours would be effective only if they also led to the formulation of a legally binding instrument on the prevention of an arms race in outer space.

Thirdly, greater transparency and confidence-building measures (TCBMs) are needed. Those efforts could build trust, lessen misunderstanding and prevent conflict. In that regard, we welcome the adoption of recommendations to promote the practical implementation of TCBMs in outer space activities, with the goal of preventing an arms race in outer space, in conformity with the recommendations set out in the report of the Group of Governmental Experts on transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities (A/68/189) at the 2023 substantive session of the United Nations Disarmament Commission. However, we maintain our view that no

measure to strengthen TCBMs can replace our goal to establish any multilateral agreements on the prevention of an arms race in outer space.

We must preserve outer space and other celestial bodies as the common heritage of humankind. Any politicization that will prevent us from achieving such noble goals must be avoided. Therefore, we urge all Member States to work together in tailoring any possible future mechanisms that will contribute to the establishment of the legally binding instrument on the prevention of an arms race in outer space. Indonesia will stand ready to support that endeavour.

**Mr. Liddle** (United Kingdom): Since my most recent statement on space (see A/C.1/76/PV.8), the number of spacecraft has increased and space debris has continued to accumulate, while the threats to global peace, security and stability have multiplied. With each passing year, the risks of an arms race and conflict in space grow and the potential consequences become more serious and more widespread as our collective dependency on space services deepens. The prevention of an arms race in outer space and conflict in space must therefore remain a priority for the Committee and for the global community.

That was why the United Kingdom launched a new initiative on the prevention of an arms race in outer space, focused on reducing space threats through norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviours. We brought that initiative forward because we believed that we needed a different approach to our shared goal of preventing an arms race in outer space — a different approach that took account of the radical developments in space technologies and activities since the agenda on the prevention of an arms race in outer space was established in 1978; a different approach that could respond to contemporary threats to space systems driven both by technological developments and the intensification of systemic competition among States.

Our goal with resolution 76/231 was to create a process that was open to all States Members of the United Nations, recognizing that all countries have dependencies on space and therefore an interest in shaping our normative approach, and to create a process that allowed States to bring fresh ideas to the table and to break out of the stagnant pattern of discussions of recent decades. Many countries agreed with us. Forty-two countries sponsored resolution 76/231 and 150 countries voted in favour of it in the General Assembly.



The Open-Ended Working Group (OEWG) on Reducing Space Threats through Norms, Rules and Principles of Responsible Behaviours concluded its work last month. Although we are disappointed that the OEWG did not adopt a consensus report, that disappointment is tempered by the knowledge that the OEWG has breathed new life into the task of preventing an arms race in outer space. We think that the OEWG has been successful in at least three ways.

First, the OEWG has improved our collective understanding of how existing international law applies to outer space and of the nature of contemporary space threats. For the first time, all United Nations Member States were involved in a comprehensive, holistic discussion of outer space security and the prevention of an arms race in outer space. It was clear from the presentations and discussions that a wide range of capabilities based on Earth and in space can be used to threaten space systems with a range of destructive and non-destructive effects. It is clear to us that a narrow focus on prohibiting the placement of weapons in outer space, leaving aside the well-known problems of definition and verification, is not sufficient to prevent an arms race in outer space.

Secondly, the OEWG also began to illustrate the benefits of an approach based on behaviours rather than capabilities. Space capabilities can serve both benign and threatening purposes, and it is difficult for others to confirm which is the primary intent. In practice, it is the ways they are used, which are to some extent observable with existing technologies, that will inform threat perceptions and drive an arms race in outer space. Therefore, working together to define and regulate behaviours could be a productive way of tackling space threats and reducing the drivers of an arms race in outer space.

Thirdly, the OEWG has shown that many States recognize that legally binding measures and political commitments both have a valuable, complementary and mutually reinforcing role to play in addressing space threats. That does not contradict the principled position of many States that legally binding instruments are the ultimate goal, and they are indeed within the scope of norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviours.

We are convinced by our experience of the OEWG that there is an appetite amongst Member States to further explore the possibilities of the responsible behaviours approach. States put forward many different

ideas for new norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviours during the OEWG, and those merit further discussion and consideration. We are therefore presenting a draft resolution (A/C.1/78/L.15) at this session of the First Committee in order to establish a second OEWG to continue that work. We welcome the continued engagement and support of all delegations in that important contribution to our collective goal of the prevention of an arms race in outer space.

**Mr. Hegazy (Egypt):** At the outset, let me express our deepest condolences to the Palestinian people and the families of the innocent fallen souls. Egypt strongly condemns the targeting of civilians in Gaza, and we reiterate our calls for an urgent and unconditional ceasefire and on Israel to immediately rescind its order of forced displacement of 1.1 million civilians to southern Gaza and to allow the unhindered access of humanitarian assistance to alleviate the ongoing human suffering of the Palestinian people.

Egypt aligns itself with the statements delivered on behalf of the Group of Arab States, the Group of African States and the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, and we would like to share the following in our national capacity.

In a world where we are witnessing a deteriorating security environment, we believe that it is time to focus on rebuilding trust among States and to avoid fragmenting disarmament efforts, including by refraining from establishing competing or parallel processes. On the contrary, we should focus on strengthening the existing forums and on developing unifying pathways that reinforce our commonalities.

While human activities in outer space continue to evolve, the need to safeguard outer space from the perils of militarization is becoming increasingly urgent, taking into consideration the extreme volatility of the outer space environment. Without prejudice to the possible value of transparency and confidence-building measures as an interim measure in the short term, there is a clear need for a legally binding instrument that would complement the existing international legal framework by preventing an arms race in outer space in all its aspects. Such a legally binding instrument should have a comprehensive scope that primarily includes prohibitions on, first, the placement of any weapons, defensive or offensive, in outer space; secondly, armed attacks or any intentional harmful interference against satellites or outer space assets; and thirdly,

the development, testing and stockpiling of weapons that are specifically designed for the sole purpose of attacking outer space assets or being deployed or used as weapon in outer space.

In this context, Egypt once again recalls the substantive progress made during the discussions of the Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) on further effective measures for the prevention of an arms race in outer space, established pursuant to resolution 72/250, which witnessed a remarkable level of depth in the discussions concerning all controversial legal and technical aspects. We look forward to convening the GGE on further practical measures for the prevention of an arms race in outer space, established pursuant to resolution 77/250, which will commence its work in November and be chaired by an expert from Egypt to consider and make recommendations on substantial elements of an international legally binding instrument on the prevention of an arms race in outer space. We encourage all delegations to participate constructively in that process to achieve the desired progress.

Furthermore, we welcome the consensual adoption in 2023 by the United Nations Disarmament Commission of the recommendations to promote the practical implementation of transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities with the goal of preventing an arms race in outer space. We call on all Member States, in particular those with major space capabilities, to implement them.

Egypt recalls the discussions of the Open-ended Working Group on Reducing Space Threats through Norms, Rules and Principles of Responsible Behaviours, established pursuant to resolution 76/231. We have participated in that process very actively and constructively, as we believe that it could represent a further step towards maintaining a safe and secure outer space, as well as developing a legally binding instrument in that domain.

Egypt and Sri Lanka have once more submitted their traditional joint annual omnibus draft resolution entitled "Prevention of an arms race in outer space" (A/C.1/78/L.3). In that vein, we welcome the consensual adoption of that text at the past two sessions, and we look forward to the support and sponsorship of Member States for this important draft resolution, which attempts to bridge the gaps and create common grounds for further progress on the prevention of an arms race in outer space.

**Mr. Pieris (Sri Lanka):** Today we live in an interconnected world where technologies, including space technologies and the services they provide, have an overarching reach and reliability and are used not only by those States that have the capacity for spacefaring. Accordingly, conflict in space affects not just the spacefaring nations but all of us, and must be avoided lest its catastrophic consequences befall all of us.

Sri Lanka recognizes the role that outer space plays in perpetuating our modern lifestyles. The daily application of satellite technology is a fact of our lives, whether in communications, navigation, determining weather patterns and climate change, or any other means. Therefore, the preservation of outer space as a common heritage of humankind utilized solely for peaceful purposes is of existential importance not just to the spacefaring nations, but to all countries. Sri Lanka therefore rejects any doctrine that categorizes outer space as a war-fighting domain or the next battlefield. Such militaristic doctrines will not only pit one spacefaring nation against another, but elevate dangerously the possibility of a doomsday that will have catastrophic consequences for all of us.

It is clear today that the existing legal regimes should be strengthened to respond to the advancement of new technologies. The legal regime should prohibit not only the weaponization of outer space or celestial bodies, but also any Earth-based weapons that target satellites or space objects. Today, given the fragile security environment, with ever-increasing super-Power rivalries, the threat of an arms race in outer space and its weaponization is a very real prospect. It is in the hope of addressing that issue that Sri Lanka and Egypt have annually submitted a draft resolution on the prevention of an arms race in outer space. We have done so this time as well. We continue to count on Members' wide support, as in previous years, in calling for the Conference on Disarmament to commence work on an international, legally binding instrument.

While it is a fact that forward movement at the Conference on Disarmament has been lacking, competing parallel processes do not render justice to the issue at hand. Unfortunately, they only serve to obfuscate the issue, entangling the issues at hand in a web of uncertainty. While we will, as a matter of principle, support any endeavour to take forward the discussion in any forum, we call on all involved to ensure that forums do not duplicate the work and do

not foist an undue burden on delegations, which can result in many smaller delegations being left out of the discussion.

We would like to welcome the consensual adoption of the recommendations of the United Nations Disarmament Commission this year to promote the practical implementation of transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities with the goal of preventing an arms race in outer space, as contained in document A/78/42, which agrees upon the noble purpose of moving towards a legally binding treaty, to be implemented in good faith by those who have the capacity to do so.

Let me conclude by saying that it is a fact that since the advent of civilization, the sky and the realms beyond have always been alluring. It remains a fact that if we do not destroy ourselves, we can reach the stars. Let us think about that. Would not a collective use of space for the common benefit of humankind surely be a wonderful substitute for war?

**Ms. Lipana** (Philippines): We align ourselves with the statements delivered by the representative of Malaysia, on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, and Indonesia, on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.

The security and sustainability of outer space have been an increasingly important topic to many delegations, including that of the Philippines. We benefit from the exploration and preservation of outer space for its peaceful use. In recent years, we have expanded our modest presence in outer space as part of our efforts to achieve our Sustainable Development Goals. Our vision of expanding that presence is crucially tied to our national resolve to address key challenges to our social and economic resilience as a people, including to mitigate the effects of climate change, which is an existential issue for the Philippines, as it is for other States. That explains the increased value that the Philippines attaches to this discussion.

As an emerging spacefaring nation, we believe that finding convergent views to increase transparency and generate norms that will safeguard outer space as a common heritage of humankind is a salient priority. That becomes especially more significant given the trend of activities that go beyond the safe and responsible use of outer space technologies, as made apparent by incidents concerning foreign rocket debris

falling into our maritime zones and the continued conduct of direct-ascent anti-satellite missile tests by certain countries.

We therefore proactively participated in the Open-Ended Working Group (OEWG) on Reducing Space Threats through Norms, Rules and Principles of Responsible Behaviours. While the Group could not adopt a substantive report during its final substantive session, we welcome the rich discussion that took place during that process. It has proven that the OEWG is a constructive platform for inclusive dialogue among Member States, with the participation of all relevant stakeholders that seek to reduce space threats through norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviours. We are therefore committed to continuing the work of the OEWG in furthering the positive developments in that regard.

We also continue to reaffirm that political commitments on responsible behaviours can be developed in support of and without prejudice to the pursuit of legally binding measures and instruments in that area. They are not mutually exclusive. We remain driven by our aspiration to a legally binding instrument on preventing an arms race in outer space, including the prevention of the placement of weapons and the threat or use of force against space objects. We therefore look forward to the work of the newly established Group of Governmental Experts on further practical measures for the prevention of an arms race in outer space in that regard.

In recent years, the First Committee has seen draft resolutions introduced on the same subject matter and that sometimes appear to be overtly competing, which has subjected Member States to the difficult task of determining which one to support. In some cases, delegations support such similar but competing resolutions, thereby producing duplicative and competing mechanisms and processes that strain the United Nations finite resources and lead to further polarization and fragmentation of the work of our Committee. We urge the main sponsors of such draft resolutions to exert every effort to arrive at an agreement with each other on a unified text. The world has seen many disheartening developments in recent years and months. We want not to further add to those negative developments, but to be a platform for collective action that can address outstanding issues on disarmament and peace and security in a timely manner.

Before I conclude, I wish to emphasize that all nations have the right to the peaceful uses of outer space, but that right must be exercised with due regard to the rights and interests of others. Transparency, communication and consultation are important in enhancing our outer space security. The security of outer space is no longer about maintaining strategic parity among major spacefaring nations; it is about securing outer space for the peaceful uses of all nations and the preservation of outer space for future generations.

**Mr. Muhamad** (Malaysia): Malaysia associates itself with the statements delivered on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

Against the backdrop of renewed geopolitical fissures, preventing the militarization of outer space is essential. We remain concerned over the possible placement and use of weapons in outer space and the use of space objects as weapons. Such actions may lead to the escalation of tensions and an arms race in outer space.

My delegation regrets that the Open-ended Working Group (OEWG) on Reducing Space Threats through Norms, Rules and Principles of Responsible Behaviours, established pursuant to resolution 76/231, was unable to adopt any outcome. Nevertheless, the deliberations of the OEWG provided a good basis for further efforts without detracting from the work of the new Group of Governmental Experts on further practical measures for the prevention of an arms race in outer space, established pursuant to resolution 77/250.

At the same time, in view of proposals under consideration at the present session of the First Committee, Malaysia underlines the importance of avoiding parallel processes of universal membership on key disarmament issues, such as the prevention of an arms race in outer space. That is important in allowing Member States, particularly those in the developing world, to continue participating actively in the evolving international discourse. We should strive to ensure an inclusive, single-track mechanism for regular institutional dialogue in that field.

Malaysia believes in the need for greater transparency and exchange of information among all actors in the outer space context, taking into account the legitimate safety and security interests of all States. We also remain committed to acceding to international

treaties governing the use of outer space that uphold the legal principles adopted by the General Assembly in its resolution 1962 (XVIII) of 1963.

In that regard, Malaysia has endorsed its 2030 national space policy and, early last year, gazetted the Malaysian Space Board Act 2022. The Act will ensure that our national space activities are carried out responsibly, safely, securely and in compliance with international guidelines. Malaysia recognizes the contributions of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space and the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs, which have played a key role in promoting international cooperation in the peaceful use of outer space, including through capacity-building programmes focused on developing countries.

In the face of uncertainty in the global security environment, let us redouble our efforts to ensure the use of outer space exclusively for peaceful purposes in the common interests of humankind.

**Mr. Štěpánek** (Czechia): Czechia aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union. Nevertheless, I would like to add a few points in our national capacity.

Let me start with a historical excursion. Three professionals of the former Czechoslovakia — the renowned legal and technical experts Professor Kopal, Dr. Perek and Dr. Lála — were at the cradle of truly multilateral cooperation in the space domain when the United Nations Committee on the Peaceful uses of Outer Space was born and the Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies was adopted in 1960s. Those professionals then served among others as high-ranking officials of the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs, and later on I had the honour and privilege to collaborate with all of them.

The epoch we live in today is somewhat similar to that of 60 years ago. It is revolutionary in the technological sense, yet also in the participatory aspect. We are now capable of exploring deep outer space, of placing scientific objects on asteroids and of filling the Earth's orbit with satellites serving the everyday needs of ordinary citizens. Regrettably, we are not in a position to agree on norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviours for the safe and secure way forward.

Czechia therefore expresses its deep disappointment over the lack of willingness of some States to adopt not only a substantive, but even a procedural report of



the Open-ended Working Group (OEWG) on Reducing Space Threats through Norms, Rules and Principles of Responsible Behaviours, established pursuant to resolution 76/231. We appreciate the high level of constructive engagement of many participants who, during the OEWG sessions under the able chairmanship of Hellmut Lagos Koller of Chile, demonstrated their true resolve to find acceptable solutions to the satisfaction of all concerned.

Given the globally increasing security and socioeconomic reliance on space assets, as well as the ever-increasing number of States, non-State and private entrepreneurial actors, as well as new types of activities, interests and associated risks, the behavioural approach is at this time the most feasible and appropriate way to encompass all new developments. Otherwise, we run the risk of negotiating a new legal instrument that will only reflect a snapshot frozen in time. Czechia therefore joins other Member States in the call for the continuation of the work of the OEWG in an open and inclusive manner.

At the same time, a flexible, forward-looking approach based on technology foresight is not in any way contradictory to the treaty-based approach. A political commitment based on commonly developed norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviours can lay the groundwork for what may later become legally underpinned obligations. In support of such an approach and to echo the statement made by the observer of the European Union on behalf of its member States at the final session of the OEWG and reaffirmed here today at the First Committee, I am pleased to confirm that Czechia commits not to conduct destructive direct-ascent anti-satellite missile testing, as per last year's resolution 77/41. We believe that this and similar commitments will contribute to the adoption of further measures to prevent an arms race in outer space and pave the way to appropriate, legally binding international norms in the long run.

Let us build on the legacy of those who were able 60 years ago, despite the Cold War and ruthless space exploration competition, to set up a framework we can still rely on, but which we should now adapt and bolster.

**Mr. Escaig** (Sweden): Sweden fully associates itself with the statement made by the observer of the European Union. I would like to add a few remarks in our national capacity.

Sweden regards outer space as a global commons to be used for the benefit of all. We underline the applicability of international law, including the Charter

of the United Nations, to all activities in outer space. The development of further norms, rules and principles should take that into account.

Sweden is strongly committed to strengthening international security and safety in outer space and the prevention of an arms race. That is essential for safeguarding the long-term use of the space environment for peaceful purposes. At the moment, developments in and with regard to space are moving very rapidly indeed. It is therefore our view that, in order to reduce space threats, agreeing on norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviours, without excluding future legally binding measures, constitutes the best and fastest way forward. In the past, agreements like those have been the path to legally binding instruments. Therefore, we believe that work in both those areas can be pursued in a progressive, sustained and complementary manner, as stated by the Secretary-General in his 2021 report (A/76/77).

Our reliance on space services is growing rapidly; so are our risks and vulnerabilities. Outer space is becoming increasingly congested and space debris now constitutes the single largest threat to our space environment. Those challenges risk limiting the peaceful use of outer space. A crisis or conflict extending into space could have catastrophic consequences for the space environment and cause similar repercussions and carnage on Earth.

Sweden participated actively in the work of the Open-ended Working Group on Reducing Space Threats through Norms, Rules and Principles of Responsible Behaviours over the past two years. It is deeply regrettable that it was not possible to adopt a consensus report, even on procedural issues. Still, the efforts undertaken in that forum were highly valuable. Discussions were interesting and engaging and contributed to promoting a common understanding of threats, policies and views on norms, rules and principles. Also, the inclusive method of work supports our view that multilateral discussion on space security involving a broad range of stakeholders is essential. All stakeholders must be heard on an issue that concerns us all. As in all matters of international security, a gender-equality perspective must also be applied in discussions on space security.

The work conducted in the Open-ended Working Group will no doubt be an excellent starting point that complements and feeds into other efforts. That includes

the Group of Governmental Experts on further practical measures for the prevention of an arms race in outer space, which will soon begin its work and to which Sweden will contribute actively. Sweden supports the establishment of a new open-ended working group to make recommendations on the development of norms, rules and principles for responsible behaviours, as proposed in draft resolution A/C.1/78/L.15, put forward by the United Kingdom and which we co-sponsor.

We welcome the fact that the Open-ended Working Group proposed by the United Kingdom would also look at the prevention of an arms race in outer space through a combination of legally and non-legally binding measures. Establishing an additional open-ended working group focused mainly on only legally binding efforts before the Group of Governmental Experts on further effective measures for the prevention of an arms race in outer space has even started would risk leading to a duplication of efforts, which would be challenging in terms of resources, not least for smaller delegations, thereby jeopardizing broad and diverse participation.

The importance of transparency and confidence-building measures to increased security and predictability must be emphasized. In that context, I would like to mention that work is ongoing on the Swedish Government's defence and security strategy for space, where we present our goals and priorities. We believe that its publication will in itself be a transparency and confidence-building measure, contributing to security in space.

As already mentioned by the observer of the European Union, all States members of the European Union, including Sweden, have made commitments not to conduct destructive direct-ascent anti-satellite missile tests. We believe that to be an important step that sends a signal of our commitment to outer space security and that also serves as a confidence-building measure. We would like to encourage other countries to do the same.

**Mr. In den Bosch** (Netherlands): In addition to the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union, I would like to make the following remarks in my national capacity.

Space security is more relevant than ever, given the increasing number of new space actors and users of space services, as well as the worsening international security situation. The recently concluded Open-ended Working Group (OEWG) on Reducing Space Threats

through Norms, Rules and Principles of Responsible Behaviours has shown that all United Nations Member States are stakeholders, whether they are spacefaring nations or not. It is widely recognized that space-based applications are utilized daily by a huge proportion of the world population, and it is essential that all States benefit from the economic and societal opportunities inherent to the space domain now and for generations to come. A safe, secure, stable and sustainable outer space is therefore of vital importance to all and the responsibility of all.

Yet we see that space security governance keeps falling behind on developments in other domains. The discussions in the Open-ended Working Group prove that this is the moment for an urgently needed leap forward. We must reduce risks, such as inadvertent escalation, by improving the governance of outer space. We note broad support for doing so by means of political commitments regarding responsible behaviours. Such commitments can be developed in support of and without prejudice to the pursuit of legally binding measures and instruments. Those two approaches are not mutually exclusive. To illustrate, the widely supported call upon all States to commit not to conduct destructive direct-ascent anti-satellite weapons testing is a pragmatic step to enshrine voluntary commitments in a future legally binding instrument.

The inherent dual-use and dual-purpose nature of space objects complicates the important discussion on preventing an arms race in outer space. Any space object can, in principle, be used as a space weapon. In addition, it is difficult to determine the capabilities and intentions of an object once it is placed in outer space. For those two reasons, proposals that focus solely on capabilities are infeasible. We can, however, address that conundrum by adopting a behavioural approach that focuses on observable actions of space objects.

In that regard, the OEWG on Reducing Space Threats through Norms, Rules and Principles of Responsible Behaviours has demonstrated its relevance as a forum to discuss outer space security in an open, substantive and interactive manner. Despite the constructive attitude of a broad majority of States, the OEWG, regrettably, could not reach consensus on recommendations. It has nevertheless enabled an inclusive dialogue among States, with the participation of all relevant stakeholders. The two joint statements delivered to the

Open-ended Working Group demonstrated the broad cross-regional support for the working group process and its continuation in the future.

In our view, the work done in the OEWG complements other efforts related to enhancing outer space security, including the newly established Group of Governmental Experts on further effective measures for the prevention of an arms race in outer space. The Netherlands is therefore committed to preserving the current momentum and supports an unambiguous follow-up process that is aimed at further convergence between those two tracks.

In that light, we are concerned about the prospect of two new parallel OEWGs. That would place a heavy burden on delegations and could negatively impact their ability to participate in the process. Moreover, discussions on practical measures should not be spread out over many years. Instead, a new open-ended working group should produce timely intermediate results in a step-by-step approach. We can make effective progress towards the prevention of an arms race in outer space by elaborating further on the concept of norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviours, and in that process develop recommendations that could include both legally binding measures and political commitments.

It is our firm opinion that the discussions on outer space here in New York, as well as in Geneva and Vienna, should contribute to a safe, secure and sustainable outer space by means of dialogue and cooperation for the benefit of everyone on Earth. The Netherlands remains fully dedicated to that endeavour.

**Mr. Bilgeri** (Austria): We align ourselves with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union and would like to share some additional observations in our national capacity.

Outer space is becoming more and more critical to our everyday life. All of our societies are increasingly dependent on services provided through outer space systems. At the same time, we are faced with a wide range of risks and threats related to outer space activities, starting with increased geopolitical tensions, security risks emerging from the development of anti-satellite capabilities and the general risk of a weaponization of space. All of that is of great concern to Austria. Also, the complexity of security issues in outer space is increasing through unprecedented advances in technology, which will continue or even accelerate in the future. At the same time, new stakeholders, such

as commercial actors, are entering the realm of outer space. Austria therefore welcomes multilateral efforts that are aimed at reducing threats, strengthening space security and preventing an arms race in outer space, which will ultimately come at the expense of the security of all humankind.

The highly disruptive potential of malicious space operations targeting space objects, be they interorbital or ground-to-orbit, entails significant repercussions on civilians on Earth by impacting key infrastructure, such as health care, transportation, communications or energy. Austria is particularly concerned about the potential humanitarian consequences on Earth of a conflict in outer space. We emphasize that international humanitarian law fully applies to outer space, in particular its principles of distinction, proportionality and precaution.

In light of all this, we urgently need to achieve substantive results in our long-standing multilateral efforts to prevent an arms race in outer space. Work undertaken in the framework of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space has delivered concrete measures for States to implement. Our work should benefit from those results. We also emphasize the important role of The Hague Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation and the Convention on Registration of Objects Launched into Outer Space. As one of the States that has ratified all outer space treaties, we encourage other States to do the same.

The complex situation of an increasingly congested and contested outer space leads to growing threat perceptions and increases the potential for misunderstandings and possible escalation. The Open-ended Working Group (OEWG) on Reducing Space Threats through Norms, Rules and Principles of Responsible Behaviours has undertaken important work to develop a multilateral response to those and related threats. We want to thank the Chair of the OEWG, Hellmut Lagos, for his excellent leadership over the past two years.

The inherent dual-use nature of many space applications and systems requires a better understanding of possible threats and their perceptions. We therefore consider a behaviour-based approach to our work to be highly beneficial and important. At the same time, we should not lose sight of the capabilities themselves, which are a technological necessity for several of those threats.

We see clear value in the work of the OEWG for the development of legally banning international rules in the future, while allowing us to address the most pressing challenges in the short term. We support a continuation of the OEWG in order to further build on the efforts and understandings we have achieved so far. We have reservations on the establishment of competing processes, and we also hope that a situation straining the resources of delegations will be avoided.

Transparency and confidence-building measures are important instruments to start mitigating several of the aforementioned risks. We encourage spacefaring nations to improve information-sharing on operations and on their national policies, to increase space situational awareness capabilities and cooperation, and to observe the relevant provisions of The Hague Code of Conduct.

When it comes to specific threats and risks, we are particularly concerned about the development and testing of kinetic anti-satellite capabilities. They endanger the peaceful use of outer space for any current and future spacefaring nations by creating space debris. Austria has joined the growing number of States that have declared a moratorium on direct-ascent anti-satellite missile tests. The conduct of non-kinetic attacks in cyberwarfare on outer space systems is extremely concerning, as it is difficult to ascertain accountability and responsibility for such attacks. The damage to space systems and the disruption of services through directed energy capabilities, electromagnetic interference, jamming, spoofing or cyberattacks often has impacts beyond the initial target.

*Ms. Nam (Australia), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.*

Austria remains very concerned about the reverberating effects any disruption or destruction of infrastructure in outer space could have on our societies' economies, as well as on human life. The infrastructure in space on which we all rely must not be endangered through military ambitions or irresponsible behaviour. The exploration and use of outer space shall be carried out for the benefit and in the interest of all countries, as set out in the 1967 Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies.

**Ms. Lia (Australia):** Space touches every aspect of our lives, from the global economy and international communications networks to military and defence capabilities globally. The issue of space security does

not just concern spacefaring nations; all countries are increasingly reliant on space services for their prosperity and security. As such, we all have a shared interest in preventing an arms race in outer space and maintaining a peaceful, safe, stable, sustainable and secure outer space environment.

At the same time, the space domain is becoming more complex and so are the nature of threats to space security. The dual-use nature of space-based capabilities means that they could be benign or threatening, depending on how they are used. The technical challenge of verifying the attributes of any object in space to assess if it is a weapon or not continues to be significant.

The question before us is how to best progress our shared goal of preventing an arms race in outer space in that context, and for Australia the answer is very clear. The best way is to reduce the threats to space systems that are a key factor in driving an arms race in outer space. That means adopting an approach that focuses on behaviours rather than on capabilities. Doing so avoids the definitional and verification challenges inherent in a capabilities-based approach.

That is why we believe that the Open-ended Working Group (OEWG) on Reducing Space Threats through Norms, Rules and Principles of Responsible Behaviours has been such a timely initiative and its continuation is so important. We welcomed the very constructive discussions at the OEWG and would like to take this opportunity to thank the Chair, Hellmut Lagos of Chile, for his excellent stewardship. The OEWG proved to be not only a very constructive platform, but also an inclusive one as well. For Australia, it is vital that we hear the voices of all interested States on this issue, including the many from our region.

We welcomed the two cross-regional joint statements made to the OEWG, which Australia and more than 30 other States joined, in support of the responsible behaviours approach. It is clear that the OEWG played a valuable role in improving States' understanding of space threats and the role that norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviours can play in reducing those threats. Australia believes that measures to reduce space threats and prevent an arms race in outer space can include both political commitments and legally binding instruments, and that those two can be mutually reinforcing. Importantly, the OEWG on responsible behaviours had a broad



mandate that enabled consideration of the full range of measures, norms, rules and principles that might assist us in achieving our shared goal.

For those reasons, we consider it essential that the work of the OEWG on responsible behaviours continue. We need to build on the very good preliminary discussions we had in the first OEWG by developing recommendations for norms, rules and principles in specific areas of concern identified by States. In that regard, Australia welcomes the Chairperson's summary of the first OEWG as an important record to assist States in efforts going forward.

There is much work that remains to be done on those issues, and Australia looks forward to contributing fulsomely and constructively to that work. But like with many other delegations, there are limits to our resources. It is therefore a matter of regret to us that a new OEWG has been proposed that would be run parallel to the OEWG on responsible behaviours. Australia cannot support the creation of a new forum when the OEWG on responsible behaviours has proven to be widely supported, has a broad mandate and offers real prospects for making progress on those critical issues.

**Mr. Himmler** (Germany): Germany fully aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union (EU). The following remarks are made in our national capacity.

The peaceful and sustainable use of space underpins our everyday life. It is an essential driver for the socioeconomic, scientific and technological progress of all States and serves to achieve the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. Germany remains firmly committed to avoiding conflict and enhancing security in outer space, with the ultimate aim of preventing an arms race. There are different ways of pursuing that goal.

In his report (A/76/77), the Secretary-General recommends a combination of binding and non-binding norms, and the space policy brief for the Summit of the Future mentions the development of international norms, rules and principles to address threats to space systems. My country has always strongly advocated the Open-ended Working Group (OEWG) on Reducing Space Threats through Norms, Rules and Principles of Responsible Behaviours as a future-oriented approach in that endeavour. In the OEWG, States discussed the international framework, risks and threats to space

security and the first elements of possible norms for responsible behaviours in an unprecedented manner. And as the former chair of the Working Group, Hellmut Lagos, said in his briefing today, thanks to the inclusive and comprehensive discussions, all States have significantly broadened their understanding of space security and first areas of convergence have emerged.

We should not address security threats in a binary logic, but rather lean on different approaches that mutually reinforce each other and contribute to that end. It is regrettable that part of the mandate conferred on the OEWG by the General Assembly remained unfulfilled due to the bewildering resistance of one delegation. However, we feel encouraged by the broad and cross-regional support expressed for the OEWG through the active participation of delegations, the impressive number of working papers and the two joint statements made by countries of different geographic backgrounds and with different degrees of economic and scientific development, calling for the continuation of the process.

That is why Germany supports and co-sponsors this year's new draft resolution on responsible behaviours (A/C.1/78/L.15), which builds on the momentum generated and sets up a new OEWG in 2025 and 2026. We believe that existing working strands, including the upcoming Group of Governmental Experts on further effective measures for the prevention of an arms race in outer space, in which my country will participate constructively, should complement and not compete against each other. Avoidable parallel processes, as created by this year's draft resolution A/C.1/78/L.55, on further practical measures, would create capacity problems and substantial legal twilight, and that is in no one's interest.

Before concluding, I should like to briefly mention two more very positive results achieved over the year. By now, a total number of 35 States have made a political commitment not to conduct destructive direct-ascent anti-satellite missile tests, based on resolution 77/41, adopted by 160 States last year. Germany and all EU member States have joined the initiative and we encourage all States to make their national commitment as soon as possible, with the goal of universalizing that concrete norm of responsible behaviour with tangible effects.

Furthermore, earlier this year the United Nations Disarmament Commission made consensus recommendations on the implementation of

transparency and confidence-building measures based on the 2013 report of the Group of Governmental Experts on Transparency and Confidence-Building Measures in Outer Space Activities (A/68/189). In its national contribution to the Secretary-General's report on transparency and confidence-building measures (TCBMs), published this summer, Germany laid out its national and international efforts in implementing TCBMs in outer space. They are an important means towards more transparency and conflict prevention and space when geopolitical tensions are rising.

My country will continue to promote the preservation of a safe, secure, sustainable and peaceful space environment. Outer space must remain a common good to be used for the benefit and in the interest of all humankind.

**Ms. Chan Valverde** (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): All space activities bring with them significant repercussions on Earth. They have an impact on health care, transport, communications and energy. Consequently, the management of space must be addressed in a holistic fashion and take account of security, safety and the peaceful use of space as inseparable components.

On the one hand, we are seeing the continued proliferation of counter-space capacities, a resurgence of anti-satellite tests in space, and an increase in robotic operations in proximity operations used for intelligence and military purposes. On the other hand, we are also seeing the proliferation of commercial uses of space that, despite being peaceful, increase the risks of collision and congestion. In the face of that reality, Costa Rica reaffirms its position of guaranteeing that outer space should be preserved exclusively for peaceful purposes.

Costa Rica firmly believes that one of the most powerful ways to achieve peace, security and sustainable development in space lies in enhancing the active and equitable participation of women in decision-making and action. Indeed, the 1967 Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies, which forms the basis for all space regulations, states in article I that the exploration and use of space shall be conducted for the benefit of humankind and "without discrimination of any kind, on a basis of equality". That mandate cannot be fulfilled without equitable gender representation

and the participation of women of all nationalities in the negotiation of mechanisms applicable to space, including for space security.

However, space activities have been dominated by men. As such, it is vital to create an inclusive and enabling environment for female participation. That involves the use of inclusive language when referring to the key space-related treaties. It also involves focusing on the gender-balanced composition of delegations speaking in space security forums. We are delighted to learn that the composition of the Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) on further effective measures for the prevention of an arms race in outer space, which will begin its work this year, will continue a positive trend, with 33 per cent female participation, whereas the participation of women in the 2019 GGE stood at 12 per cent, with only 3 women out of 24 experts. That contrasts with the Group of Governmental Experts on Transparency and Confidence-Building Measures in Outer Space Activities, which in 2012 had no female representation. Those working groups have never had a women Chair.

It is not trivial to note that the only consensual agreement that we have reached in the past year was achieved under the female leadership of Working Group II of the United Nations Disarmament Commission. With the broader participation of women, we were able to begin to engage in more comprehensive security-related discussions. Instead of focusing on threats, we were able to work on establishing transparency and confidence-building measures; instead of focusing on aggression and armed conflicts, we should focus our efforts on human security. Without the equal participation of women, we will not be able to work in line with the common understanding that space is the heritage of all humankind.

Our efforts must focus on preventing an arms race in outer space, fostering dialogue, implementing transparency and confidence-building measures and preserving space for development. With that in mind, Costa Rica joins those countries that have expressed their commitment not to carry out destructive direct-ascent anti-satellite missile tests and thereby avert their widespread and irreversible impacts on the outer space environment.

**Mr. Vidal Mercado** (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): Chile aligns itself with the statement made by the

representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.

We reaffirm that the use of outer space must be peaceful and sustainable and aimed at benefitting and serving the interests of humankind. In no circumstances must outer space be a battlefield. Consequently, we must prevent an arms race and, of course, any escalation of armed conflict in outer space. The population's growing dependency on the services provided by objects in orbit means that outer space, its threats and challenges know no bounds. As such, it is necessary, and indeed vital that we prove ourselves able to pool our efforts and advance on a path that will allow us to make concrete progress.

We must also consider the environmental and humanitarian consequences of activities harmful to space systems. We are aware of the various perceptions of threats related to the nature and risk of environmental damage in outer space, such as those that may result from the destruction of satellites. Those very same threats, if they were to materialize, would have effects on Earth.

As we indicated in the general debate (see A/C.1/78/PV.5), Chile advocates for the existence of norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviours in relation to threats posed by States to space systems. That includes, as appropriate, the negotiation of legally binding instruments to prevent an arms race in outer space. Moreover, Chile commends the work conducted during the sessions of the Open-ended Working Group on Reducing Space Threats through Norms, Rules and Principles of Responsible Behaviours. We particularly congratulate its Chair, Hellmut Lagos, our compatriot. Open discussions that allow for the exchange of ideas will allow us to forge ahead on a journey that will produce binding and non-binding norms for a peaceful and safe space environment.

We profoundly regret that a consensus document was not adopted. However, we firmly believe that the questions, ideas and concerns broached in the four sessions of the Open-ended Working Group will remain significant and serve the upcoming discussions and processes related to space security. There is also an urgent need to negotiate an internationally legally binding instrument on the prevention of an arms race in outer space, and we hope that those negotiations will occur. We also believe that hostile behaviours that lead to the disruption of space systems, pose a high risk of escalation, lack transparency and confidence-building measures, and impact the security and safety of peoples and goods cannot be permitted.

We reiterate that the primary threat we face is the placement of weapons in outer space. That risk must be avoided because outer space cannot become a launchpad for aggression and war or a place for threats and quests for superiority and supremacy. We are concerned about interference and malicious cyberactivity targeting navigation and communication satellites.

In conclusion, we appeal for the strengthening of the existing international framework applicable to outer space by effectively addressing concerns regarding space security and rapid technological progress. We support the greater development and implementation of transparency and confidence-building measures.

**Mr. Rakhmetullin (Kazakhstan):** The exploration and use of outer space must be undertaken for peaceful purposes and carried out only for the benefit and in the interests of all countries, regardless of their economic and scientific development. We firmly believe that preventing an arms race in outer space is an essential condition for promoting and strengthening international cooperation in the exploration and use of outer space for peaceful purposes. Negotiations for the conclusion of an international legally binding instrument to prevent an arms race in outer space remain a priority task for the Conference on Disarmament. Concrete proposals on transparency and confidence-building measures need to be an integral part of such an instrument.

Outer space is today an extraordinarily dynamic environment that is developing at an unprecedented pace. There are many States, intergovernmental organizations and non-State actors engaged in space activities. We are witnessing the proliferation of nanosatellites and the use of robotics for on-orbit servicing and active debris removal. Almost all countries today rely on space-based communications and space-facilitated functions. All of those elements also have a negative side. Outer space is becoming a place of contest for supremacy that draws heavily on space-based communications and intelligence assets and the early development of anti-satellite weaponry. Such ammunition can pose a great danger to the international community.

We need to follow the guidelines of the United Nations Group of Governmental Experts on Transparency and Confidence-Building Measures in Outer Space Activities, which provide for constructive behaviour in the promotion of global best practices for governmental and private space activities. We also

need to adopt the guidelines of the United Nations Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space on the long-term sustainability of activities in the outer space environment. Equally important is constructive thinking on satellite collision avoidance. We must follow up the extensive and thoughtful inputs coming from the various United Nations agencies.

Confidence-building measures are essential in formulating general considerations and measures for preventing the militarization of outer space. We see great value in the resolution on no first placement of weapons in outer space. We are also supportive of the resolution on transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities. Kazakhstan fully endorses the draft treaty on the prevention of the placement of weapons in outer space, introduced by China and Russia at the Conference on Disarmament in 2008 and in 2014. Regrettably, the impasse in the Conference on Disarmament has so far impeded all attempts to achieve a legally binding international agreement. My country considers The Hague Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation to be an important element of the non-proliferation regime.

Several countries possess sophisticated space programmes, while others are just beginning to join the space race. We need to ensure that dual-use systems that could be potentially weaponized do not undermine the existing structure of agreements on arms limitations. That is particularly relevant in the sphere of nuclear missiles.

As a responsible international actor, as well as a unilateral adherent to the principles and guidelines of the Missile Technology Control Regime, Kazakhstan would like to reiterate that our common goal is to ensure that space remains a sphere of cooperation that must be kept free from weapons. It is our firm conviction that space should be used only for the benefit and progress of humankind.

**Mr. Sarwani** (Pakistan): We align ourselves with the statement delivered by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.

As our dependence on outer space in our daily lives has increased, so have the threats and likelihood of a conflict in or from outer space. The most visible manifestation of that is the unstoppable arms race, the weaponization of outer space and its increasing characterization as the next war-fighting frontier in the policies and doctrines of major Powers. The mutually

reinforcing nature of defensive and offensive capabilities, such as the deployment of missile defence systems and their amalgamation with outer space systems, is adversely impacting strategic stability at the global and regional levels. Destabilizing capabilities, such as anti-satellite weapons and directed-energy weapons, are being complemented by non-kinetic capabilities.

Modern weapons increasingly rely on space-based technologies. There is consequently the risk that fighting on the ground, at sea and in the air could spill over into outer space and be triggered by dynamics there. Let us make no mistake — any conflict, if it erupts in or originates from outer space, will not remain limited to that domain; it will have devastating consequences on our daily lives and its effects will be far and wide across various domains. All States, even those that may not have space assets, will be affected.

Against that backdrop, the urgent need to undertake meaningful action has never been greater. It is regrettable that there has been no progress under the agenda of the prevention of an arms race in outer space for over four decades. At first, the naysayers denied the possibility of an arms race in outer space; then they said that it was too late to prevent its militarization and called for focus on non-weaponization instead; and it is now being asserted that, given its dual-use nature, the only pragmatic way to make progress is to focus efforts exclusively on behaviours, while ignoring capabilities. That framing is tenuous at best and at worst risks legitimizing the weaponization of outer space.

Space security is currently undergoing a crisis of framing. Some States have started questioning the utility of the prevention of an arms race in outer space agenda, a priority that was established at the first special session devoted to disarmament. Divisions on how to pursue space security have sharpened, as we are now seeing competing processes and divergences in conceptual approaches. Pakistan believes that a comprehensive approach that includes a dual focus on both capabilities and behaviours offers the best pathway for progress, as has been the case with several legally binding and non-legally binding measures developed throughout history.

Pakistan has consistently supported negotiations on a legally binding instrument on the prevention of an arms race in outer space. Concurrently, we have also actively contributed to non-legally binding measures, such as transparency and confidence-building



measures. We recognize the complementarity between the two approaches. Historically, non-legally binding measures have contributed to the development of legally binding instruments and hold the potential to do so in the future. However, it is crucial to underline that they serve as neither a substitute nor a conditional first step for such binding instruments. Pursuing non-legally binding measures should not divert our attention from legally binding instruments.

It is regrettable that a handful of States continue to block the start of negotiations on a legal instrument in the Conference on Disarmament, citing definitional and verification-related issues without explaining how such negotiations would affect their security interests. They have also not explained why definitional and verification issues cannot be taken up during the negotiations.

In conclusion, a holistic approach to security in outer space remains the most viable option for making progress on preventing an arms race in outer space and to preserve outer space free from conflict for succeeding generations.

**Mr. Muhith** (Bangladesh): Bangladesh aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries. Allow me to speak in my national capacity.

Bangladesh firmly believes that access to outer space is an inalienable right of all States and recognizes outer space as a global commons of all humankind and beyond the jurisdiction of any single State. We underscore that the exploration and use of outer space should be for exclusively peaceful purposes, which would benefit all humankind. To reinforce that commitment, we proudly joined the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space.

We remain deeply concerned at the catastrophic consequences of weaponization, strategy competition and military conflicts in outer space. Armed conflict in space would make the entire domain a battlefield and jeopardize international peace and security. As a State party to the Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies, we reaffirm the vital importance of preventing an arms race in outer space. We reiterate our call for all activities in outer space to be undertaken in accordance with international law and the principle of non-appropriation of outer space.

Over the past decade, the outer space environment has been significantly impacted by the growing number of space objects, the increasing involvement of private-sector actors, the decreasing costs associated with launching objects into orbit, and the planned human missions to deep space. The distinction between the peaceful and military applications of outer space has become increasingly blurred. That highlights the urgent need to strengthen the current legal framework and security aspects of outer space to address emerging threats. While transparency and confidence-building measures play a valuable role in fostering trust among nations, they cannot replace the necessity of a legally binding agreement. Bangladesh re-emphasizes the urgent need for the commencement of substantive negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament on a legally binding and multilaterally verifiable instrument on the prevention of an arms race in outer space in all its aspects.

We remain concerned regarding deliberate debris-creating activities, including kinetic direct-ascent anti-satellite tests, uncoordinated launches and uncontrolled re-entry. Increasing congestion and competition in outer space could imperil access and use by succeeding generations. We emphasize the necessity for improved information-sharing regarding the purpose of space objects, the intentions behind operations and the corresponding mechanisms. We urge States not to use any space or ground-based capabilities, including anti-satellite systems, whether exclusively military or multi-use, to deliberately damage or destroy space assets.

With our first communication satellite, Bangabandhu 1, launched into space in 2018, our stake in a secured and peaceful outer space is greater than ever before. We therefore call on spacefaring nations to respect applicable laws and norms on the use of weapons in outer space and to develop appropriate and effective instruments that will prevent an arms race in outer space.

Bangladesh underscores that activities in outer space must not remain the exclusive preserve of a small group of States. We call for the strengthening of capacity-building programmes, with particular emphasis on developing countries, to ensure that outer space is, both in principle and in practice, a truly global commons of which all States can avail themselves.

We regret that the Open-ended Working Group on Reducing Space Threats through Norms, Rules and Principles of Responsible Behaviours could not adopt a substantive report during its final substantive session this year. We take note, however, of the rich discussions during that process.

Bangladesh rejects any unilateral coercive measures that contravene international law and could hinder or prevent space activities for peaceful purposes by developing countries. The major space actors that have been mostly responsible for damaging the outer space environment to date should also take upon themselves the added responsibility to make that expanding frontier for human endeavour safe and sustainable. Our collective responsibility to effectively govern outer space is something that we owe to present and future generations.

**Mr. Moharram** (Saudi Arabia) (*spoke in Arabic*): The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia condemns in the strongest terms the heinous crime committed by the Israeli occupation forces in bombing the Al-Ahli Al-Ma'madani Hospital in Gaza, killing hundreds of civilians. The Kingdom categorically denounces that brutal aggression, which starkly contravenes all international laws and norms, including international humanitarian law. We call for an immediate ceasefire and the entry of humanitarian aid, and we reject the forced displacement of the Palestinian people.

My country's delegation associates itself with the statements delivered on behalf of the Group of Arab States and the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, and would like to make the following remarks in its national capacity.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia welcomes initiatives to regulate space exploration for peaceful purposes in the service of humankind. That should be carried out without prejudice to existing space treaties and conventions, alongside the role of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS) and its two subcommittees. The Committee plays an essential role in leading discussions within the United Nations to establish regulations, responsible behaviours and international responsibility on outer space, without prejudice to the inalienable right of States to use outer space for peaceful purposes.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia believes that it is important to preserve outer space as an arena free from military activity, refrain from inflicting harm on the

assets of other States and ban the placement of objects that carry nuclear weapons. Outer space should remain an environment available to all States through common understandings that would facilitate cooperation in the peaceful exploration of outer space. Achieving that aim requires confidence-building measures and promoting the capacities of developing countries with a view to reaching legally binding rules and guidelines on the peaceful uses of outer space and the responsible use of its resources.

It is also important to enhance transparency criteria to avoid misunderstandings and miscalculations through information-sharing on space vehicle launch programmes. Efforts should be made to prevent attempts to destroy satellites, inflict physical damage, launch cyberattacks on ground stations or cause signal interference or interception. Efforts also should be made to limit long-term space debris and improve the management of space traffic. The Kingdom believes that there should be international definitions for space-related terms.

During its chairmanship of the Group of 20 (G20), the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia hosted Space20, a one-of-a-kind gathering under the banner "Space Economy Leaders Meeting", in which the heads of G20 space agencies and many other consultation organizations and companies, economic entities and space experts participated. The Meeting was aimed at coordinating the efforts of space agencies for the peaceful uses of outer space, supporting the present and future efforts of Member States in that field and developing a new path of integration in space economy, which is a new and important horizon in world economy.

**Mr. Guerra** (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): Argentina recognizes the common interests of humankind and the sovereign right of all States to participate in the exploration and use of outer space for exclusively peaceful purposes, and is convinced of the benefits that brings.

We believe that the prevention of an arms race in outer space and the prohibition of the placement or use of weapons there is important for preventing a serious threat to international peace and security. We therefore stress the need to make progress on a substantive normative framework in a scarcely regulated environment that is being affected by an increase in space activity as a product of current technological progress. In that context, we reaffirm

the centrality of the Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies, in maintaining that arena for peaceful uses and promoting the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, with a view to ensuring international peace and security and the promotion of international cooperation,

Argentina supports negotiations under way within the Conference on Disarmament of a legally binding instrument that prohibits the placement of missiles in outer space. We hope that that body will be reactivated because it is the negotiating forum par excellence that will enable the negotiation of such a treaty and other arms regulation and disarmament treaties. However, until then, we encourage the strengthening of transparency and confidence-building measures in activities related to outer space. The Hague Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation, to which my country adheres, is a good example of transparency and confidence-building measures in relation to prior notification of ballistic missile launches and space launches.

Argentina is in favour of a comprehensive approach to the prevention of an arms race in outer space. Any future legally binding instrument should include regulations on the behaviour of States, such as capacity, equipment and technology controls. Bearing in mind the dual-use nature of space technology, we believe that particular attention should be paid to avoiding elements that could affect the right to develop and acquire technology for the peaceful use of outer space. In that regard, we also underscore the fact that any future instrument should contain capacity-building provisions that are in line with obligations enshrined in that treaty and address the technological challenges arising from verification matters. We point to recommendations on the prevention of an arms race in outer space, adopted by consensus at the 2023 substantive session. That set of recommendations, achieved after six years of work, makes it clear that diplomacy can offer concrete results in terms of the disarmament and non-proliferation regime,

Technological progress in the field of space requires us to tackle the challenges that arise, fostering synergies and interconnection between the various forums discussing issues related to outer space, including COPUOS and the Fourth Committee, with respect to the use of space for exclusively peaceful purposes, and the Conference on Disarmament, the First Committee

and the United Nations Disarmament Commission with respect to the prevention of an arms race in outer space. We therefore urge everyone to work with a more cross-cutting and interinstitutional approach so as to make maximum use of the United Nations system's capacities to address those new challenges and grey areas, among other aspects.

We also wish to thank the Chair of the Open-ended Working Group on Reducing Space Threats through Norms, Rules and Principles of Responsible Behaviours, Hellmut Lagos of Chile, for his work over the past two years. We regret the fact that the Group was unable to achieve a consensus outcome document, but we believe that the discussions he steered were productive and will provide input to future negotiations. In that vein, we highlight in general the contributions made by the groups of governmental experts and the open-ended working groups, which provided clarity and laid the foundations for a new legal order. However, we underscore the importance of avoiding overlapping mechanisms and initiatives on the same issue, which can hinder the participation of all delegations and affect the outcomes of the various processes.

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

**Mr. Alqaisi (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*):** In reply to the many interventions made by the representative of Israel during the First Committee's meetings over the past few days on the heinous Israeli aggression against the Gaza Strip, it is my honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Group of Arab States.

I would like at the outset to offer, on behalf of the Arab Group, my deep condolences to the families of the martyrs in Gaza, asking God to have mercy upon them and grant the injured quick recovery.

The falsification of facts is an approach that Israel continues to follow in order to hide the crimes it has committed for decades against the defenceless Palestinian people, culminating in the horrific acts we are seeing today against innocent civilians in Gaza, the latest of which was the crime committed by the occupation forces in Al-Ahli Al-Ma'madani Hospital in the Gaza Strip. Hundreds of martyrs have fallen there, including children, women, the elderly

and the innocent. The Arab Group reiterates in the strongest terms its condemnation and denunciation of the massacres committed by Israel against civilians in the Strip. The Arab Group holds Israel, the occupying Power, fully responsible for those heinous crimes, which cannot be overlooked.

We call on the international community and the United Nations to move immediately to ensure a ceasefire and the entry of basic humanitarian and medical aid to the Strip. We stress the need to provide protection to the medical teams, relief workers and others working in the humanitarian field, as well as medical, educational and United Nations institutions, in line with international humanitarian law and the relevant resolutions of international legitimacy. We also stress that attempts to forcefully displace populations from their homeland to a third country is a war crime under the Fourth Geneva Convention.

We urge the representative of Israel, through the chairmanship, to refrain from using the forum of the First Committee, which is mandated to discuss the agenda items on disarmament and international security, to disseminate falsifications and fabricate events related to the grave Israeli aggression against the Gaza Strip and the horrible humanitarian situation suffered by the people of Gaza. We call on the representative of Israel to focus instead on issues that are relevant to disarmament, with the aim of promoting international peace and security by dealing with the topics on our agenda to identify solutions to current challenges in the context of international security system.

Israel has consistently undermined that system by refusing to join the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons as a non-nuclear State and to subject its facilities to the safeguards system of the International Atomic Energy Agency. Furthermore, Israel has categorically refused to join the efforts of the countries of the region by participating in the work of the United Nations Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction.

**Mrs. Maayan** (Israel): I did not plan to take the floor under this cluster discussion, but I must react to the statements made on behalf of the Group of Arab States earlier and just now, as well as by several other representatives during the debate today.

Surprisingly, no such strong condemnations were heard by almost any of the members of the Arab Group when more than 1,400 Israeli civilians were slaughtered.

We will not be lectured by countries that advocate for the rights of Palestinians, yet seem to care about Palestinians only if they can use them as a weapon against Israel. I did not think it would be necessary to recall this again, but a lie must be faced with a shield of facts.

As proved earlier and clearly by Israel and other States, the many innocent civilians in the Gaza hospital were killed as a result of the Islamic Jihad's rocket. I turn to all present, not only the Member States that were quick to blame Israel without checking the facts. No one should let Hamas spread its lies and disinformation. No should play into the hands of terror. Hamas and Islamic Jihad are genocidal terror groups that just a few days ago slaughtered, mutilated and raped 1,400 innocent civilians in Israel. Israel is a free, democratic State defending its citizens. Hamas issued a statement minutes after the event, blaming Israel and appearing to conflate the figures of those who died.

On the other hand, Israel conducted a thorough and intelligence-led investigation based on facts. If, given those facts, some still choose to adopt the Hamas version or even give both versions equal status, then they have completely lost their moral compass and they are endangering people around the world. Some of those reactions have resulted in riots, violence and incitement to murder. Jews have been attacked, synagogues burned.

Let us also remember who arms, finances and trains those terrorist groups — the Islamic Republic of Iran. The many deaths on both sides, Israeli and Palestinian, are a direct result of Iran's attempt to export its extreme murderous ideology. It exports it to Gaza, across our region and across the globe.

We sit in this room and hear time and time again different representatives who try to present themselves as human rights activists. If that were really the case, those representatives would have condemned the deaths of innocent civilians, no matter their nationality or religion. They would call for the immediate release of more than 200 hostages, amongst them the elderly, women, children and babies. They would call for the immediate cessation of the indiscriminate launching of missiles from and towards civilian populations.

No one should be fooled. Iran has nothing but disdain for human rights and for those who believe in them. Only yesterday, we heard the leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran once again justifying the 7 October massacre. He even threatened to use more proxy terrorist



groups against Israel, with Iran's typical double-speak standards. Its representatives sit and pretend to promote peace while their leaders call for genocide. But let me say it one more time — evil will not prevail. Terrorism will not prevail. Israel will prevail.

**Mr. Al-dobhany** (Yemen) (*spoke in Arabic*): I have asked to speak in exercise of the right of reply in response to a statement made by the representative of Israel, who distorted facts and sought to derail the work of the First Committee while trying to shirk responsibility for the crimes committed by Israel against the Palestinian people every day.

Yemen condemns in the strongest terms the crimes against humanity perpetrated by Israel against the Palestinian people in Gaza, the latest of which was the heinous crime against the Al-Ahli Al-Ma'madani Hospital, in addition to the crimes and massacres it commits daily against women and children. My country demands that Israel, the occupying Power, cease fire immediately, allow the entry of humanitarian assistance and stop the forced displacement of Palestinians. We also call upon the international community to stop resorting to double standards and hypocrisy and to apply international law and international humanitarian law without selectivity.

**The Acting Chair:** I now call on the representative of the State of Palestine.

**Mr. Kasabri** (Palestine) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like at the outset to associate myself with the statement delivered by the representative of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan on behalf of the Group of Arab States.

I strongly condemn the criminal attack launched by the State of Israel against the Palestinian people in Gaza, which led recently to the bombing of an important hospital in Gaza that was built in 1882, that is, prior to the establishment of the Zionist entity. That hospital was sheltering hundreds of families and children who had found safe refuge there from the missiles that rain down on their heads day and night. Nevertheless, Israel chose to bomb the hospital and to kill hundreds therein, adding to our suffering.

I do not want to engage in these exchanges or to refute the Israeli lies about who bombed the hospital and who did not. We are accustomed to such lies, whereby crimes are committed then denied. We have heard the same thing whenever Israel perpetrates multiple crimes,

such as the killing of Shireen Abu Akleh, Mohammad Al-Durrah and others. I am not going to enumerate all the crimes committed by the State of Israel. However, all indications we have — including a statement by an Israeli information officer who wrote on Twitter that he believed that there was a Hamas base at the hospital and then deleted the tweet — is that the hospital was bombed using heavy military equipment that no one in the region possesses but Israel. Denying the pain and suffering of people is even more heinous than the crime itself.

**Mr. Ghorbanpour Najafabadi** (Islamic Republic of Iran): I am compelled to take the floor to exercise my right of reply to the absurd and nonsensical statement and baseless allegations made by the representative of the Israeli regime against my country. We emphasize those statements as irrelevant because the representative of that illegitimate regime does not even respect the agenda of this body. Of course, we are not surprised by Israel's continuous violation of rules, either in this meeting or, even worse, in the occupied territories. We also strongly and categorically reject the allegations levelled against us.

Actions speak louder than words. It is the Israeli regime that has been threatening the regional countries with nuclear annihilation, relying on its clandestine weapons of mass destruction programme, and it is that occupier regime that has been continuously violating all human rights and international humanitarian law in Palestine. Like other countries, we categorically condemn the Israeli regime for all those atrocities.

As mentioned before, and in order to shed further light on the atrocities of that regime, I should emphasize that the positions and actions of the occupying regime have shocked the world over the past few days. It has committed crimes under international criminal law and the provisions of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

Seventy-five years after the Israeli regime occupied the Palestinian territory, it controls that area through repression, institutionalized discrimination and systematic abuses of the Palestinian population. The regime has created a dire record in all aspects. One vivid example thereof is the imposition of a complete siege of the Gaza Strip, totally depriving Gazans of electricity, food and fuel, and tightening even further the existing sixteen-year blockade thereof. The Israeli regime's Minister of Defence bluntly said last week that "we

are fighting human animals and we act accordingly”. War crimes are an everyday occurrence in the occupied territories. The targeting of civilians, including women, the elderly and children, is clear evidence of war crimes and grave breaches of international humanitarian law, according to the 1949 Geneva Conventions. Torture and inhuman treatment cause psychological suffering among Palestinian civilians who, every night without electricity, fear for their lives as the bombings continue. Such behaviour wilfully causes great suffering and serious injury to the body and health.

The combined effects of the total blockade of Gaza and the war on the mental health of children are devastating. Children who survive wars do not emerge unscathed and can pay a high price psychologically,

emotionally and behaviourally, including symptoms of anxiety, depression and trauma. The extensive destruction and appropriation of properties are not justified by military necessity and are carried out unlawfully and shamelessly. From 7 October until now, the Israelis have razed thousands of housing units and private and public properties. Unlawful deprivation of freedoms and unlawful confinement are rife. More than 400,000 Palestinians have been forced to flee their homes in Gaza due to the continuous and heavy indiscriminate Israeli strikes. On 13 October, Israel ordered the evacuation of 1.1 million Palestinians in Gaza.

*The meeting rose at 1 p.m.*