



# General Assembly

Seventy-eighth session

## First Committee

**23<sup>rd</sup>** meeting

Wednesday, 25 October 2023, 3 p.m.  
New York

Official Records

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

*The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.*

### Agenda items 90 to 106 (continued)

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

**The Chair:** I would like to warmly welcome Ms. Radha Day, Chief of the Regional Disarmament, Information and Outreach Branch of the Office for Disarmament Affairs; Ms. Soledad Urruela, Director of the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean; Mr. Deepayan Basu Ray, Director of the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific; and Mr. Anselme Yabouri, Director of the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa.

In accordance with the programme of work, the Committee will first hear briefings by our panellists before changing to an informal mode in order to afford delegations the opportunity to ask questions. Thereafter, the formal plenary will resume in order to allow the Committee to continue its thematic discussions under the cluster “Disarmament machinery”.

Before proceeding further, allow me to make an announcement on some organizational matters.

As members may recall, during our meeting yesterday afternoon (see A/C.1/78/PV.21), I announced my intention to hold an additional plenary meeting on

Thursday, 26 October at 10 a.m. However, given the progress we are making on the list of speakers for the thematic discussion segments, I would like to inform delegations that the additional plenary meeting is now cancelled and will not take place. Therefore, the First Committee will convene tomorrow only in the afternoon, at 3 p.m., in this same conference room.

I would also like to remind delegations that the secretariat of the First Committee will hold a briefing on the voting process during the action phase of the Committee tomorrow — Thursday, 26 October — at 1:15 p.m., in this same conference room.

The Committee will now hear briefings by our panellists. We will first hear the introductory remarks of Ms. Radha Day, Chief of the Regional Disarmament, Information and Outreach Branch of the Office for Disarmament Affairs.

**Ms. Day** (Chief, Regional Disarmament, Information and Outreach Branch, Office for Disarmament Affairs): I am honoured to address the First Committee and to be joined by the Directors of the United Nations Regional Centres for Peace and Disarmament in Africa, Asia and the Pacific, and Latin America and the Caribbean.

The Office for Disarmament Affairs, through its Regional Centres, provides substantive support to Member States in their regions, including in partnership with regional organizations, civil society organizations and other stakeholders. The Centres have continued to provide legal and procedural assistance in support of States’ efforts to adhere to

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the relevant multilateral instruments and to address the illicit trade in conventional weapons and their ammunition. Supporting the relevant frameworks at the regional and subregional levels is also a priority for the Regional Centres, which have engaged with regional and subregional organizations so as to ensure tailored approaches.

Furthermore, the Regional Centres have actively engaged in a wide range of education, information and outreach activities, with the Vienna Office playing a leading role in developing the Office's disarmament education strategy, while expanding and promoting its multilingual e-learning platform, the Disarmament Education Dashboard. With its usership reaching approximately 25,000 registered users, the innovative online learning programme has supported outreach and educational activities around the world, including other Regional Centres. Moreover, the Regional Centres have supported States and other stakeholders in strengthening their capacity for integrating a gender perspective into small arms control programming and engaging educated young people in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation through the Office's Youth For Disarmament platform. Members will soon hear about the various aspects of the Regional Centres' work in greater detail.

In conclusion, I would like to thank the Member States and organizations that have made financial or in-kind contributions to the Regional Centres and, in particular, the Governments of Nepal, Peru and Togo for their long-standing support for our Regional Centres, and Austria for its support for our Office in Vienna. Our Regional Centres and the Vienna Office depend on extrabudgetary resources to fund their substantive programmes and activities. I therefore invite all Member States to support them through voluntary contributions, which enable them to maintain and expand their operations and activities.

**The Chair:** I thank the Chief of the Regional Disarmament, Information and Outreach Branch, for her statement.

I now give the floor to the Director of the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, Ms. Soledad Urruela.

**Ms. Urruela** (Director, United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean): It is my pleasure

to address the First Committee in order to provide an overview of the work of the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean (UNLIREC), complementing the Secretary-General's report contained in document A/78/153.

The region has long suffered the consequences of the illicit trafficking, diversion and theft of firearms and ammunition by organized criminal networks and gangs and the resulting armed violence, which, in some countries, can reach levels comparable to armed conflict settings. That affects public safety and security and has a negative impact on sustainable development. The issue remains high on the agenda, which is why UNLIREC continues to focus on addressing and reducing illicit arms flows and supporting disarmament-related regional and national strategies and action plans.

Of the 16 States that adopted the Roadmap for Implementing the Caribbean Priority Actions on the Illicit Proliferation of Firearms and Ammunition across the Caribbean in a Sustainable Manner by 2030 in 2020, 12 have since either promulgated their national action plans or are currently drafting them. The Roadmap includes the establishment of a monitoring and evaluation framework and a regular review cycle. This year, UNLIREC and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Implementation Agency for Crime and Security, as co-custodians of the Roadmap, launched a monitoring and evaluation reporting platform designed to streamline the reporting process and provide an efficient and secure vehicle to share progress, highlight success and bring attention to areas requiring additional support. The Centre's support to Haiti is also organized within the framework of the Roadmap. UNLIREC works in close collaboration with the United Nations Integrated Office in Haiti and other United Nations agencies to ensure cohesion and integration with broader United Nations efforts. This year, the Centre is scaling up its assistance to Haiti with a multi-year capacity-building project dedicated, inter alia, to physical security and stockpile management, border security training and equipment and providing technical support to address violence against women.

Last year, the General Assembly of the Organization of American States (OAS) mandated the development of a proposal for a Central American road map in order to prevent the illicit proliferation and trafficking of firearms and ammunition. The Centre and the OAS are working with countries in the region on defining

the shared priorities, structure and content of the road map, with the first in-person meeting of national focal points currently taking place in Panama, and will take the initiative forward with the Central American integration system.

In response to specific requests for assistance, the Centre continued to provide capacity-building and training at the national level and to roll out its flagship courses, including those on combating arms and ammunition trafficking and interdicting small arms ammunition, parts and components. The Centre further supported efforts to reduce the diversion of arms and ammunition from Government stockpiles, including through technical armoury assessments and the delivery of a containerized evidence storage solution to Trinidad and Tobago.

The region remains active in combating the threat posed by the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and the Centre actively supports those efforts. Most recently, the Centre published a study on the region's progress in fulfilling commitments with respect to the non-proliferation of biological weapons; in particular, the Biological Weapons Convention and Security Council resolution 1540 (2004). In support of the implementation of resolution 1540 (2004), the Centre supported a regional industry outreach conference in the framework of the Wiesbaden process in Santiago, Chile, earlier this month.

Strengthening partnerships for disarmament is essential to the work of UNLIREC. In addition to the close collaboration with regional entities, such as OAS and the CARICOM Implementation Agency for Crime and Security, the Centre continues to strengthen its collaboration with United Nations partners, such as the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, as well as civil society organizations, including the Mines Advisory Group — which became a Caribbean Firearms Roadmap partner this year — and the Small Arms Survey, building a strong regional network and maximizing available resources. The Saving Lives Entity fund is another example of a strong partnership within the United Nations system, with the Office for Disarmament Affairs and its Regional Centres working with the United Nations Development Programme, resident coordinators and other agencies to provide selected countries with transformative, sustained support to combat armed violence and reduce the flow of illicit weapons. Jamaica was the first beneficiary

in the region, with Honduras following soon after and Panama being the most recent country to be selected.

The prevention of violence against women remains a top priority. With a view to integrating gender considerations into criminal firearms investigation processes, UNLIREC continued to offer courses on firearms investigations from a gender perspective and finalized training manuals for two new specialized courses tailored to prosecutors and judges. UNLIREC has also created spaces for exchange and dialogue among young people, aimed at bringing disarmament and arms control issues closer to youth, and will continue to mobilize resources to ensure meaningful engagement with young people in the region, with several activities planned for 2024. As part of its youth and disarmament education efforts, the Centre further continued to implement its Guidelines for the Development of Protocols to Tackle the Presence and Use of Firearms in Schools initiative, aimed at fostering national dialogues on armed violence prevention in school settings.

While many challenges are shared across Latin America and the Caribbean, the region continues to take a leadership role in political processes linked to disarmament and arms control, as evidenced during the recent negotiations for the upcoming Global Framework for Through-life Conventional Ammunition Management.

In conclusion, I would like to express my deepest appreciation for the States and organizations that support the work of UNLIREC. I thank the Government of Peru for the support that it has provided in its capacity as host country for the Centre. I also thank our donors — the Governments of Canada, Germany and the United States, and the European Union — for their generous contributions. I would also like to thank the Government of Spain for its voluntary contribution and the Governments of Guyana, Mexico, Panama and Peru for their financial contributions. Finally, I would encourage countries and organizations in a position to do so to provide the Centre with financial and in-kind support so that it can continue in its important role.

**The Chair:** I thank the Director of the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean for her statement.

I now give the floor to the Director of the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific.

**Mr. Basu Ray** (Director, United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific): I am grateful for the opportunity to address the First Committee in my capacity as the Director of the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific (UNRCPD). I would like to share with the Committee some reflections on the work of UNRCPD over the past year.

In order to effectively fulfil its mandate, UNRCPD has been assisting States in the region to achieve their peace, security and disarmament goals by providing substantive support and advice and coordinating technical support activities at the national, subregional and regional levels. UNRCPD has consistently worked to develop meaningful, co-creative and sustainable engagements with a wide array of partners within and beyond our region. Our approach has centred on identifying and strengthening national and regional expertise and establishing collaborative ways of working with Government entities, civil society organizations, international and regional organizations and United Nations partners. Our networked way of working is critical to addressing some of the key trends and developments in the Asia-Pacific region. For instance, there is a strong focus on the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the region. Though progress on SDG 16 remains slow, there is a growing recognition that renewing a focus on disarmament and arms control will have positive implications on the achievement of the other SDGs.

In that regard, the strong show of support for the Secretary-General's New Agenda for Peace from across the region presents opportunities to catalyse progress on stalled indicators of the SDGs related to peace and disarmament. Our interlocutors have also told us that there is a need for more formal and informal spaces in the region for inter-State dialogue on critical security issues, such as risk reduction, transparency and confidence-building measures. Having access to those spaces could help reverse the trend of declining report submissions to mechanisms, such as the Register of Conventional Arms, wherein submissions of annual reports by countries in the Asia group has declined from 31 States, in 2004, to six, in 2022. It is also worth noting that ratifications of, and accessions to, international arms control regimes have remained low in the Asia-Pacific region over the past year. That, of course, can be attributed in large part to a combination of geopolitical realities, the prioritization of other critical agendas,

such as climate change and the SDGs, and human, technical and financial resource constraints in the face of the economic crisis following the coronavirus disease pandemic. However, regional cooperation has also progressed in a number of encouraging ways. For example, the recently agreed declaration on combating arms smuggling adopted by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is a milestone for the ASEAN region and a great indication of the growing focus on disarmament and arms control challenges that the subregion has to contend with.

Over the past year, UNRCPD has worked tirelessly to deliver on the broad strategic objectives of the Office for Disarmament Affairs. Whereas in-depth details of the activities of the Centre can be found in the report of the Secretary-General (A/78/123), please allow me the opportunity to reflect on some of the Centre's key strategic initiatives. The UNRCPD team has been working closely with its counterpart to develop the twenty-second iteration of the United Nations-Republic of Korea Joint Conference on Disarmament and Non-Proliferation Issues, to be held in December, in Geneva. This year's Conference will focus on the governance of artificial intelligence in the military domain. It is worth noting that this year will mark the first time that the Conference has been held outside the region, with a view to inviting additional perspectives and expertise to contribute to the deliberations.

With regard to the Saving Lives Entity fund, UNRCPD played a central role in developing and delivering the joint scoping mission for Papua New Guinea. We have also worked closely with partners to develop the follow-up programme of support for the Government. The Centre has also been working with its partners to set up the upcoming exploratory mission to the Kyrgyz Republic. UNRCPD is also supporting capacity-building activities in Asia and the Pacific, as part of the European Union-funded project to support the implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. Earlier this month, we convened the first of a series of regional dialogues with a view to strengthening regional engagement at the upcoming fourth United Nations Conference to Review Progress Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action, in June 2024. Representatives from 22 countries in our region took part in the deliberations.



Concerning the weapons of mass destruction portfolio, in August 2023, UNRCPD jointly organized a South Asian subregional workshop, together with the Biological Weapons Convention Implementation Support Unit, to explore approaches to strengthening the implementation of the Convention in the region. Together with its partners at the Prajnya Trust, the Centre also hosted the second annual iteration of the Disarmament Toolkit online course in June. The course explored in detail the key debates, challenges and opportunities in disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control and encouraged participants to contribute to discussions about peace and security in their respective contexts. Looking forward, UNRCPD aims to broaden and deepen its partnerships with civil society and Governments in the region. Our strategic objective — to significantly increase the universalization of disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation treaties and regimes — will remain at the forefront of our efforts. We will aim to leverage the United Nations convening mandate in order to foster critical dialogue on risk reduction, transparency and confidence-building measures across the region. Finally, given the demographics of our region, we will also begin work to expand our engagement with young people and actively support their dynamism and creativity to find solutions to the challenges that our world faces.

Before I conclude, on behalf of our brilliant team at UNRCPD, I would like to express our heartfelt gratitude to our generous and gracious host, the Government and the people of Nepal, for their ongoing support to UNRCPD and for being an active and visionary partner with the Centre. We also would like to thank Thailand for its regular continuing annual contributions in support of the work of the Centre. In addition, we would also like to express our appreciation to the People's Republic of China, the Republic of Korea, Sweden, and the European Union for their voluntary contributions, which have been at the core of the Centre's programmes and activities. Those financial contributions allow for the Centre to deliver on its activities and we continue to be very grateful for all of the support that has been provided to UNRCPD to date.

**The Chair:** I thank the Director of the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific for his statement.

I now give the floor to the Director of the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa.

**Mr. Yabouri** (Director, United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa): I am honoured to address the First Committee in my capacity as Director of the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa (UNREC).

Today I would like to highlight the challenges, opportunities and progress in the field of disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation on the African continent. This statement complements the latest report of the Secretary-General on UNREC (A/78/152).

Disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation in Africa face a multitude of challenges, including the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, together with the steady availability of ammunition. Those challenges are further compounded by insecurity driven by violent extremism, armed conflicts, the instability of Governments and the economic strain induced by external shocks, such as climate change and geopolitical tensions, particularly in the Sahelo-Saharan region and, increasingly, towards the coastal States of the Gulf of Guinea. Terrorist groups increasingly divert and traffic sophisticated weaponry, in frequent connection with transnational criminal networks, which pose a challenge for border control.

Climate change and competition for scarce resources contribute to violent intercommunal conflicts. They are exacerbated by violent extremist and criminal groups; economic vulnerabilities stemming from denied access to farming and grazing areas; the mass closure of schools, local markets and routes, which disrupt livelihood opportunities; as well as the coronavirus disease pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis arising from the conflict in Ukraine and Middle East, fuelling population displacements within and beyond Africa.

There are also opportunities and positive initiatives aimed at promoting peace, stability and security that ought to be supported. The Regional Centre continues to support not only African Member States, but also African regional and subregional organizations in promoting disarmament, including the African Union (AU), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Economic Community of Central African States, the Lake Chad Basin Commission, the West African Economic and Monetary Union, as well

as the Regional Centre on Small Arms in the Great Lakes Region, the Horn of Africa and Bordering States.

The visit of the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs to the AU leadership in Addis Ababa on 16 and 17 May resulted in an AU-United Nations official development assistance cooperation matrix that will serve as the basis for the development of a prioritized programmatic document for joint resource mobilization, programmes, project development and implementation in arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament and monitoring and evaluation, in line with the African Union's Silencing the Guns initiative.

As in previous years, in September 2023, UNREC supported the AU Peace and Security Council and the AU Commission, as well as the Government of Mozambique, in organizing the 2023 edition of Africa Amnesty Month in Maputo, Mozambique. The core objective of the commemoration was to champion disarmament and arms control towards sustainable peace and security throughout the continent by encouraging the voluntary surrender and subsequent destruction of illicit arms held by civilians during highly publicized events.

On 23 November 2022, delegates from the 15 national commissions on small arms and light weapons of the ECOWAS region visited UNREC premises, under the leadership of the ECOWAS Commission, to discuss efforts to counter the illicit proliferation of small arms and light weapons, emphasizing the urgent need for international cooperation to enhance the secure management of Government-held arms and ammunition, as well as to improve cross-border security in order to deter the illicit proliferation in trafficking, especially in the Lake Chad basin and the Liptako-Gourma and neighbouring regions. During the visits, the ECOWAS Commission issued a statement, on behalf of the national commissions, expressing gratitude to UNREC for its valuable support and calling for strengthened cooperation.

UNREC has also supported universalization and the implementation of national and regional capacity-building workshops on the Biological Weapons Convention in the Northern, Western and Central African regions, as well as the implementation in Cameroon of a project meant to link the fight against arms control and disarmament with early recovery and socioeconomic development, with funding support from the Saving Lives Entity fund. With the

ECOWAS Commission, UNREC co-organized a regional workshop focused on establishing a national control list by ECOWAS member States on promoting the universalization of the Arms Trade Treaty in West Africa. And, together with the West African Economic and Monetary Union, UNREC will organize a training workshop for the national commissions on small arms and light weapons for its eight member States. The workshop, held in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, concluded with the development of a comprehensive plan of action tailored to the specific needs and priorities of each Member State. That action plan will serve as a road map for the implementation of effective strategies and measures to tackle the issues related to small arms and light weapons in the region.

Moving forward, and upon receipt of the 2023 United Nations Development Programme Civil Society Advisory Committee funding, UNREC will be working with the Development Coordination Office, together with the other two Regional Centres, to explore how best to integrate arms control into national and regional development frameworks in Africa and thus deepen national-level impact. Additionally, UNREC will hold a series of regional consultations in preparation for the fourth United Nations Conference to Review Progress Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, to be held in June 2024.

In conclusion, let me say that arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation are tangible investments in peace, security and sustainable development, with high-interest yields. Promoting peace, education and social engagement is critical for building strong governance and arms control efforts, particularly among women, youth and civil society organizations, in order to sustain peace. I would like to express my gratitude to Member States, including our host country, Togo, whose contributions have enabled the Centre to fulfil its mandate. I call for continued and increased support so as to further empower UNREC to promote the United Nations agenda for a more stable and secure Africa that contributes to global peace and security and protects humankind and its future generations from systemic threats.

**The Chair:** I thank the Director of the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa.

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

*The meeting was suspended at 3.35 p.m. and resumed at 3.55 p.m.*

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

**Mr. Ahmed (Egypt):** At the outset, we once again express our firm solidarity with the Palestinians in Gaza as they face a new episode of untold suffering. We firmly condemn the atrocious attacks against civilians and their forced displacement. We call for an immediate ceasefire and unimpeded access to humanitarian relief.

Egypt aligns itself with the statements made on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and the Group of Arab States (see A/C.1/78/PV.22) and wishes to make several remarks in its national capacity.

Egypt attaches great importance to the United Nations disarmament machinery and considers disarmament and arms control to be an essential pillar of the United Nations mandate to preserve international peace and security. The current geopolitical tensions and cascading risks and crises re-emphasize the need for robust action on that front as a matter of urgency. The stalemate in disarmament efforts is not necessarily the result of gaps and deficits in the machinery itself, as much as it is a reflection of the lack of political will by some States that seek to maintain absolute military dominance and believe in deterrence rather than collaborative and collective security.

Egypt looks forward to the convening of a successful fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament as a landmark event that is urgently needed to address the current state of inaction. We believe that the Secretary-General’s new Agenda for Disarmament and the road to the Summit of the Future, and the Summit itself, are an opportunity for stimulating progress and breaking the current stalemate.

The failure of the Conference on Disarmament to adopt a balanced and comprehensive programme of work for more than 25 years needs to come to an end and requires immediate action to rectify the situation. We believe that this can be achieved only through refocusing on the agreed priorities and launching

negotiations on the verifiable and irreversible total elimination of nuclear weapons, with specific benchmarks and timelines and based on the existing obligations and commitments, including under article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).

There is also a need for similar efforts to revitalize the Disarmament Commission as a single universal disarmament deliberative body. As we welcome the Commission’s adoption of a set of recommendations on transparency and confidence-building in outer space activities, under the chairmanship of Kazakhstan, the Commission should be allowed to adopt recommendations on its annual standing agenda item on nuclear disarmament.

We welcome the role of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) and the Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters. We reiterate our call for more financial independence for UNIDIR in order to enable it to continue to generate new ideas and promote practical actions on disarmament.

Furthermore, seeking better synergies and coordination among the First Committee, the Conference on Disarmament, the Disarmament Commission and UNIDIR may contribute to a more efficient and effective functioning of the machinery at large. We take note with appreciation of the active role and contribution of non-governmental organizations and civil society in support of the United Nations disarmament machinery, taking into consideration the intergovernmental nature of any negotiation process, as well as the applicable rules of procedure and methods of work.

Egypt supports further efforts to ensure female representation and geographic equity in the work of the disarmament machinery, including the staffing of the Office for Disarmament Affairs and UNIDIR, as well as the composition of the various Groups of Governmental Experts.

Finally, I regret that I must once again raise an important issue pertaining to the 2022 volume of the *United Nations Disarmament Yearbook*, launched by the Office for Disarmament Affairs, using the term “States possessing nuclear weapons” twice. We have clarified several times in the past that this term represents a departure from the NPT. The Treaty recognizes only five nuclear-weapon States. Egypt expects the Office for Disarmament Affairs to use the correct term, which

is “nuclear-weapon States”. We are not in a position to recognize, under any circumstances, any legitimization of nuclear-weapon States beyond the framework of the NPT.

**Mr. Sivamohan** (Malaysia): Malaysia associates itself with the statements delivered by the representatives of Indonesia, on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, and Singapore, on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (see A/C.1/78/PV.22).

As competition intensifies among the major Powers and global tensions rise, the multilateral disarmament machinery must remain fit for purpose. The full and effective implementation of obligations and commitments under existing disarmament treaties is essential in upholding their credibility and integrity.

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is a case in point. Following two successive Review Conferences of the Parties to the NPT without a substantive outcome, States parties should redouble efforts to maintain the Treaty’s role as the cornerstone of the global nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime.

The First Committee retains a key role as a platform for discourse among Member States and for the consideration of solutions to prevailing challenges in the field of disarmament and international security. Malaysia is concerned about the widening of the trust deficit witnessed in the First Committee in recent years. This is reflected in the general tenor of debates and in the consideration of draft resolutions and draft decisions, on which consensus is becoming increasingly difficult. In the present circumstances, the role of diplomacy, dialogue and confidence-building cannot be overstated.

If the Conference on Disarmament (CD) is to live up to its position as the single multilateral negotiating forum on disarmament of the international community, it must move past the institutional deadlock that has persisted for close to three decades. Agreement on a balanced and comprehensive programme of work cannot be deferred indefinitely if the CD is to retain its relevance.

Malaysia recognizes the importance of the Disarmament Commission as the sole specialized, deliberative body within the multilateral disarmament machinery. We welcome the consensus adoption, in April, of the Commission’s recommendations on transparency and confidence-building measures

relating to the prevention of an arms race in outer space. Malaysia calls for constructive deliberations on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation in the Commission’s new cycle commencing in 2024, with a view to producing consensus substantive recommendations. Furthermore, my delegation reiterates its support for the efforts of the United Nations regional centres for peace and disarmament, including in the Asia-Pacific.

The disarmament machinery must keep pace with developments across a range of areas, demonstrating resilience and responsiveness in the face of emerging challenges. Malaysia is committed to working with all Member States to that end.

**Mr. In Den Bosch** (Kingdom of the Netherlands): The Kingdom of the Netherlands aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of the European Union and the joint statement on gender and disarmament delivered by the representative of Ireland (see A/C.1/78/PV.22). I would like to make the following remarks in my national capacity.

The arms control agreements that are essential to maintaining global peace and stability are under pressure. Progress on the realization of crucial instruments, such as the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and the treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices continues to be hampered, while the Conference on Disarmament has not started negotiations on a new disarmament instrument for nearly three decades. At the same time, we are facing significant geopolitical shifts and global threats. As we rise to address them, we have to be mindful that we can succeed in our quest for a peaceful, just and prosperous world only through international cooperation and multilateralism.

With that in mind, we have a solemn and collective responsibility to defend, strengthen, but also expand on the norms, principles and agreements that make up the corpus of that multilateral system. That requires an effective, constructive and truly multilateral disarmament machinery. In that light, we are deeply concerned about the increasing use of consensus as a de facto veto in the Conference on Disarmament (CD), in various meetings of States parties, as well as in working groups.

We have to reinvigorate the CD if we are to truly realize its unique role as the single multilateral negotiating forum on disarmament. During a retreat this summer in Montreux, proposals were discussed



to make the Conference more inclusive and to ensure greater continuity and consistency between priorities of CD presidencies. That is not new. The United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research compiled a long list of useful proposals, among them a 2019 Netherlands working paper, titled “Back to Basics”, which contains practical suggestions to ensure that the CD can again focus on the substance of its work instead of discussing a programme of work at length.

A New Agenda for Peace is a timely and comprehensive vision on how to address the multifaceted challenges we face today, including in the field of disarmament and international security. Reducing nuclear risks, advancing disarmament and preventing arms races in both new and old domains are key to fostering a safer world and to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Tackling those challenges requires a diversity of actors working together in an inclusive manner in the field of disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control. We are, therefore, concerned about the increasing pushback on gender language in First Committee resolutions, outcome documents of meetings of States parties, as well as in reports of working groups.

Let me conclude by stating there is not much wrong with the disarmament machinery itself. Of course, every machine needs a drop of oil and some regular maintenance or it risks breaking down. However, the main issue we are facing is not the state of the machine, but the way the different operators behave. Some want to go faster in the light of new challenges and risks, others pull the brakes and, unfortunately, at least one wants to shift it into reverse. No wonder we do not go anywhere.

That has to stop. It is all about political will. Let us do what we must do to address the security challenges — old and new — we are facing today. Let us stop discussing conditions for commencing negotiations and actually start negotiating. There are ample opportunities to do so, in the Working Group on the Strengthening of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction, in the new session of the Conference on Disarmament, in the second Preparatory Committee for the eleventh Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, just to mention a few.

**Mr. Jerman** (Slovenia): First of all, I would like to align my statement with the statement delivered by the representative of the European Union (see A/C.1/78/PV.22).

I will add two points in my national capacity related to the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva, as stated before, a single international negotiating body for disarmament negotiations.

Slovenia regrets that it was not able to participate in the work of the Conference on Disarmament this year owing to its unprecedented decision not to allow observer States to participate in its work. Slovenia hopes that the Conference will be more inclusive next year.

Moreover, Slovenia believes that there is room for the enlargement of the membership of the Conference. New members would bring new and fresh ideas to the Conference. The appointment of a special coordinator for enlargement would be a step in the right direction and beneficial to all — members and non-members.

The rest of the statement will be published on the website.

**Mr. Kmentt** (Austria): At times when tensions are high and international peace and security is at risk, multilateral treaties and the structures of cooperation in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation are more needed than ever. They are indispensable to maintain dialogue, build trust and counter arms-race dynamics. They also play a crucial role in preventing misunderstandings and miscalculations, avoiding the possible catastrophic consequences of armed conflict and safeguarding the principles of international humanitarian law and the protection of civilians.

Today global tensions are high, conflicts emerge and re-emerge and the overall geopolitical risks are acute. In addition, we have to adjust to new challenges and changing circumstances in the field of disarmament owing to scientific and technological developments but also the role and influence of new actors. Against that background, we are in urgent need of multilateral structures of cooperation that are both effective and flexible and lead to progress in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation. Unfortunately, in its current state, what we call the disarmament machinery is neither effective nor flexible and certainly does not resemble machinery. It is a mirror of the geopolitical tensions and the decreasing will by some actors to seek constructive multilateral solutions.

That not only concerns the long-standing stalemate within the Conference on Disarmament, which has failed to produce any substantive work since the negotiation of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, but also extends to a wide range of instruments where work is stalled. It is the most serious in the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons but we see similar problems in most other disarmament and non-proliferation and export-control forums.

We are concerned about the problematic approaches to the consensus principle. That principle, when applied in good faith guides us to solutions and outcomes acceptable to all. Too often, consensus is abused for procedural manoeuvres, to prevent substantive exchanges and productive work or to block its reflection in documents. In that way, the consensus rule reflects a veto mindset, which fundamentally undermines multilateral cooperation.

At the same time, we observe the active participation of a growing number of States from different regions. The increased diversity of positions and valid security and humanitarian concerns are contradicted by an outdated worldview of a few countries, which is contrary to the spirit of the General Assembly and to the United Nations as a whole. The crisis also concerns attempts to limit the participation of civil society, academia and other stakeholders. Broader stakeholder involvement yields far better results. Our disarmament machinery has also far too often failed to include affected communities, victims and survivors. Our field of work requires a broadening of the discourse and the inclusion of different stakeholders. We need to be clear-eyed that attempts to limit that originate from a mindset of wanting to prevent scrutiny and stifle debate and progress.

Austria commends and supports all efforts to change that situation and to revitalize our various instruments and disarmament forums. However, we need to underline that patchwork approaches are not enough to address the scale of the problems at hand. We need to at least start discussions on a broader reform, and we welcome the Secretary-General's recommendation in that regard for the New Agenda for Peace. Austria remains convinced that it is in the vital security interest of all to strengthen our institutions, to stay firm on our established norms, to fully implement our treaty obligations and to continue to shape the future multilateral disarmament regime. It is important that all States committed to multilateralism join hands.

In difficult times we must not forget that multilateral disarmament is a long-term commitment and a central goal of the United Nations since its inception.

We also want to underline that gender equality and the full, effective and meaningful participation of women in disarmament and non-proliferation forums, as well as a stronger focus on gender-specific impacts in our work, remain a particular concern for us. We therefore fully subscribe to the joint statement on that issue delivered by the representative of Ireland (see A/C.1/78/PV.22).

Finally, Austria is fully aligned with the statement delivered by the representative of the European Union (see A/C.1/78/PV.22).

**Mr. Vidal (Chile)** (*spoke in Spanish*): Chile aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and the statement delivered by the representative of Ireland on gender and disarmament (see A/C.1/78/PV.22).

On this occasion, we will focus on gender, and we will be brief.

We welcome the texts that are focused on gender parity and equality and that strengthen the promotion of human rights of women, girls and dissidents in multilateral forums and international organizations and those that include a gender perspective in the negotiations.

We underscore that the threats posed by disarmament and nuclear weapons can have a differentiated impact on women and girls, and we therefore urge Member States to better understand the negative effects of armed violence resulting from and related to that group.

We must recall that references to gender issues are essential and based on existing mandates of the United Nations, especially in the area of international security. We must make this an inclusive, equitable and effective process in terms of gender.

We welcome the commitments and recommendations made in various resolutions in relation to gender, diversity and inclusion. We appreciate the experiences shared in the First Committee to ensure a gender perspective in disarmament and international security policies and initiatives.

**Ms. Thomas Ramírez (Cuba)** (*spoke in Spanish*): We align ourselves with the statement delivered by the

representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/78/PV.22).

Cuba fully supports the central role of the United Nations in promoting multilateralism as a basic principle and as the only effective approach to conducting international negotiations on disarmament and non-proliferation.

We support the work of the Organization's disarmament machinery. We draw attention to the need to preserve existing agreements on disarmament and arms regulation and to deepen international cooperation so as to ensure their strict observance and enhance multilateral negotiations. We oppose all attempts to erode the disarmament architecture or to weaken and put an end to multilateral negotiations on the subject.

Member States must renew their commitment to the Conference on Disarmament. Cuba supports the important mandate of the Conference as the sole multilateral forum for negotiating legally binding instruments on disarmament. It is now necessary to fulfil its mandate, ensure its vitality and preserve its rules, procedures and practices, in particular the consensus method as the fundamental basis for its work. In that regard, we join the consensus in the hope that, by 2023, the Conference will have been able to discuss several important issues, including nuclear-weapon-free zones, nuclear disarmament and verification and artificial intelligence in the military field, among other topics.

Nevertheless, that is not enough. We cannot be satisfied with duplicating the deliberative mandate of the Disarmament Commission. In order for the disarmament machinery that was conceived during the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament to operate properly, each component must serve its purpose. The political will that made it possible to adopt an annual report by consensus should be brought to the next session of the Conference in order to urgently adopt a comprehensive, balanced and negotiation-oriented programme of work that meets the demands for peace and stability of today's world.

The Conference's ability to make a decisive contribution to the goal of achieving general and complete disarmament, starting with nuclear disarmament, will depend on the political will of all of its member States. The Conference has proven that it has the capacity to simultaneously negotiate multiple texts. We must do so urgently, with a view to achieving a legally binding instrument to prevent an arms race in

outer space, a separate instrument to provide security guarantees for States that — like Cuba — do not possess nuclear weapons, and a third to prohibit the production of fissile material for the manufacture of nuclear weapons or other devices of the same nature.

We welcome the fact that the resumption of the Disarmament Commission's substantive work in 2022 made it possible to resume the debate in that specialized deliberative body of the disarmament machinery. We applaud the adoption of recommendations on transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space at the conclusion of its review cycle that year. We call on the Commission to agree on recommendations for nuclear disarmament, which remains the top disarmament priority. Cuba will continue to promote the preservation and strengthening of the disarmament machinery, in strict adherence to multilateralism, the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and international law.

**Mr. Molla** (Bangladesh): Bangladesh aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/78/PV.22). We wish to add the following remarks in our national capacity.

Bangladesh stands as a steadfast advocate for multilateralism in the quest for general and complete disarmament. Given the intricate security challenges prevailing in today's world, we recognize that there is no alternative to multilateral cooperation. It is our shared goal to bolster the effectiveness of the United Nations disarmament machinery. We reaffirm our unwavering commitment to the work of the three mutually reinforcing forums of the multilateral disarmament machinery, namely, the First Committee, the Conference on Disarmament (CD) and the Disarmament Commission. As a global community, we have a collective duty to uphold their centrality and legitimacy in order to ensure that those forums remain pertinent, delivering outcomes that align with their agreed-upon mandates. Those mechanisms have successfully delivered landmark treaties and normative frameworks through their established procedures. We appreciate the continued support of the Secretary-General and the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs in that regard.

We are deeply concerned about the erosion of the rules-based multilateral system in the field of disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control.

Bangladesh feels that the key problem is the lack of political will by some countries to achieve progress, especially on nuclear disarmament. We share our profound frustration and concerns, like many other delegations, over the prolonged state of paralysis of the Conference on Disarmament, as the sole disarmament negotiating forum. We can no longer afford to be caught in the never-ending loop of repeating past activities that have repeatedly failed to bring us any closer to an agreement on a programme of work. It is imperative to internalize that this continued impasse is entirely unsustainable. Not only does it seriously undermine the CD's credibility, but it also poses a growing threat to its relevance and stature in the international community. We must act decisively to break free from this paralysing cycle.

Bangladesh welcomes the resumption of the Disarmament Commission's work in 2022 and, particularly, the adoption of recommendations to promote the practical implementation of transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space. However, it is indeed regrettable that the Commission was unable to reach a consensus on another critical agenda item, entitled "Recommendations for achieving the objective of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons". We look forward to the new cycle of the Disarmament Commission, starting with the 2024 session, and sincerely hope that it can fulfil its mandate by adopting mutually agreed substantive recommendations during that period.

Bangladesh strongly advocates a more focused and efficient First Committee, dedicated to non-proliferation and disarmament, by minimizing redundancy and duplication. We emphasize the critical need to comprehensively review the Committee's working methods, with a view to enhancing efficiency and relevance. We appreciate the work of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research and commend the Institute for its high-quality independent research and timely discussions on issues within the field of disarmament. We also recognize the useful learning resources developed by the Office for Disarmament Affairs.

In the realm of disarmament, advancing gender equality and empowering women and girls are key priorities for Bangladesh. We join the call for the equal engagement and meaningful participation of women at all levels of disarmament initiatives and forums. We therefore align ourselves with the joint statement

delivered by the representative of Ireland in that regard (see A/C.1/78/PV.22).

Finally, we reaffirm our support for convening the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament at an early date. We believe that it would give Member States a renewed opportunity to demonstrate their collective will to reinvigorate the entire disarmament machinery.

**Ms. Seong-Mee Yoon** (Republic of Korea): In the face of growing multidimensional challenges in today's international security environment, the trinity of disarmament machinery, namely, the First Committee, the Conference on Disarmament and the developing countries, is more relevant and crucial than ever. However, the relevance of the CD is being tested. Last year, we saw the regrettable breakaway from the tradition of adopting the CD draft resolution by consensus. This year is not much different. The CD was not able to agree on the establishment of ad hoc committees or the approval of observers, and there have been no negotiations on substantive matters for two decades.

Despite that unfavourable situation, the presidencies of the CD made visible efforts to uphold the CD. We appreciate their active efforts to organize thematic sessions on key issues, including nuclear disarmament, nuclear risk reduction, a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices (FMCT) and bringing in gender and youth perspectives. In particular, the retreat co-hosted by the French and German presidencies, offered useful insights for the revitalization of the CD. Such efforts are indeed in line with paragraph 10 of the final document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (resolution S-10/2), held in 1978, which stipulates that

"Although the decisive factor for achieving real measures of disarmament is the 'political will' of States, especially those possessing nuclear weapons, a significant role can also be played by the effective functioning of an appropriate international machinery designed to deal with the problems of disarmament in its various aspects."

The annual report fell short of capturing this important development in the CD, owing to the wish of a few member States to reflect only the minimum. As a member State of both the CD and the United Nations, the Republic of Korea strongly believes that the United



Nations Member States that support the CD's annual budget deserve to be better informed with a more detailed report.

The Republic of Korea is of the view that the next logical step for the CD is to embark on the long-overdue negotiations, in accordance with the 1995 Shannon mandate, to conclude the FMCT. We also appreciate the United States for submitting draft resolution A/C.1/78/L.51/Rev.1, on prohibiting the use of radiological weapons. We believe that the draft resolution can contribute to reinvigorating the CD through negotiations over the concrete issues that Member States are likely to agree on.

The Republic of Korea appreciates the active role of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) for its contribution to in-depth research across a wide range of disarmament issues, especially by including emerging issues such as space security, artificial intelligence and cybersecurity. We will continue our partnership with UNIDIR by supporting the launches of the Space Security Portal and the Lexicon for Outer Space Security, as well as sponsoring its Youth Engagement Programme.

The Republic of Korea is also fully committed to the work of the Disarmament Commission, the sole and unique deliberative body for submitting recommendations to the General Assembly. In that respect, my delegation is pleased that earlier this year, the Commission managed to produce a consensus outcome on the outer space issues. While it is still regrettable that the Commission was unable to deliver any recommendations on the nuclear issues by consensus, we expect the Commission to continue to play a crucial role in facilitating Member States to share views and produce outcomes on various disarmament agendas.

**Mr. Belousov** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We believe that the United Nations should play a leading role in addressing arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation issues, as well as issues of international peace and global security, as it was intended when the Organization was established. The task of strengthening existing arms control regimes and developing new ones should be carried out either within the framework of existing conventions and regimes or within the disarmament machinery of the United Nations. That is the only principle that can ensure genuine multilateralism in disarmament and take into account the security interests of all parties involved. We

must intensify the progressive and constructive work of all elements of the unique disarmament triad, namely, the First Committee, the Disarmament Commission and the Conference on Disarmament (CD). To that end, Member States should strictly adhere to the mandates and rules of procedure of those structures. They should also refrain from politicization, which is severely detrimental to the search for consensus solutions to the pressing problems of arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation.

In that regard, the ongoing attempts by Western countries to undermine multilateral disarmament forums and use the United Nations to serve their own narrow selfish ambitions without taking into account the interests of other Member States, especially developing countries, require special attention from the international community. Western countries continue to politicize the activities of the First Committee, the Disarmament Commission and the CD. They openly call for the revision of the current arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation architecture, which is based on the norms and principles of international law, and call for it to be replaced with non-binding rules designed to ensure the continued dominance of that group of States. We consider such actions to be absolutely unacceptable, as they lead to confrontations and division among the international community and to increased tensions and loss of trust. They also distract from the real international security issues. Such steps provoke the further erosion of the existing international legal system in the field of arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation. They undermine international security, in general, and make it impossible to achieve any progress towards complete and general disarmament.

The activities of the CD are a clear illustration of the destructive tendencies I have just mentioned. In violation of the Conference's mandate, Western States are using the forum to settle political scores and consolidate their priorities on the disarmament platform. Attempts are being made to introduce issues into the Conference on Disarmament that are not directly related to its mandate and agenda. The reason for that state of affairs lies not in the principles of the Conference's work, but in the unwillingness of Western colleagues to engage in the implementation of the Conference's mandate in accordance with the decisions of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, namely, to negotiate international legally

binding instruments on arms control and disarmament. That is the reason behind the CD's lack of effectiveness.

Russia will continue its efforts to improve the effectiveness and coherence of the United Nations international mechanism, and it is important to oppose any attempts to revise it. The work of the First Committee, CD and the Disarmament Commission should be results-oriented and carried out in full compliance with the Charter of the United Nations and other norms of international law and the powers assigned to them. The idea of reforming the fundamental working methods and rules of procedure of the United Nations disarmament forums is counterproductive. We would like to recall the continued relevance of the Russian initiative presented in March 2016 to overcome 20 years of stagnation in the negotiating work of the CD.

We renew our call to begin drafting an international convention for the suppression of acts of chemical and biological terrorism, which would help to overcome the stagnation and to launch the negotiation process at the Conference on Disarmament, in accordance with the existing mandate. The Russian-Chinese draft treaty on the prevention of the placement of weapons in outer space and of the threat or use of force against outer space objects remains on the table at the CD. Reaching agreement on that document or any other agreement based on it is of fundamental importance for international security. We are convinced that the Conference, owing to its unique status as the sole forum for negotiations in the field of disarmament, can make a significant contribution to normalizing the international security situation and building confidence and trust among States.

**Mr. Ghorbanpour Najafabadi** (Islamic Republic of Iran): The Islamic Republic of Iran extends its sincere condolences and steadfast sympathy to the oppressed people of Palestine. We strongly condemn the continued perpetration of heinous atrocity crimes in Gaza by the Israeli regime and the inaction by the international community in the face of that barbarism.

My delegation aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/78/PV.22).

The international community must reaffirm the enduring importance of multilateral diplomacy in the realm of disarmament and non-proliferation. We firmly believe that nuclear weapons remain a grave existential

threat to the world. That is why it is imperative for countries to remain committed to the ultimate goal of achieving a nuclear-weapon-free world. In that vein, we must address the fact that the outlawed regime of Israel has threatened Iran with nuclear weapons. Additionally, nuclear disarmament must be pursued through verifiable, irreversible and transparent means, with all nuclear-weapon States and their proponents honouring their legal obligations.

Regrettably, the United Nations disarmament machinery, particularly the Conference on Disarmament (CD), has been hindered by a glaring lack of genuine political will among certain nuclear-weapon States and their supporters. The persistent nuclear disarmament deficit, exemplified by the failures of the 2015 and 2022 Review Conferences of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), poses a significant impediment to the global non-proliferation and disarmament framework.

In that context, it is imperative to safeguard and strengthen existing treaties and agreements; uphold the norm against nuclear-weapon testing, proliferation and use; and work towards eliminating the role of nuclear weapons. Moreover, we must encourage verifiable and irreversible actions and the disarmament of chemical and biological weapons. We must explore every avenue and seize all opportunities to rejuvenate the United Nations disarmament architecture and machinery, charting a course towards the complete elimination of weapons of mass destruction at both the global and regional levels. Addressing the threat posed by the Israeli regime's weapons of mass destruction and related threats should be a top priority in that regard.

Specifically, with regard to the United Nations disarmament machinery, it is crucial to strengthen the role and mandate of the CD — the sole multilateral disarmament negotiating body. The CD should resume its substantive work and, importantly, initiate negotiations on a comprehensive nuclear weapons convention. We commend the leadership of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries in the special sessions of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament.

The Conference on Disarmament must adopt a programme of work that activates its functionality, encouraging its role as a negotiating body and preventing attempts to reduce it to a mere deliberative mechanism. In order to overcome the long-standing deadlock that has hampered the effectiveness of the

CD, it is incumbent upon all its members, especially nuclear-weapon States, to display the necessary political will and uphold their commitment to nuclear disarmament. It is essential to resolve that impasse without compromising the CD's mandate.

In the First Committee, the continued negative votes of the United States and the Israeli regime undermine the cherished practice of consensual decision-making and reflect a regrettably divisive approach to disarmament. The foremost priority of the disarmament machinery should be achieving consensus, rather than delving into divisive issues. Furthermore, the arbitrary compliance reports submitted by the United States on arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament agreements and commitments should not only cease, but should also be rejected, as they undermine the authority of relevant international instruments and organizations. The United States should fulfil its legal obligations to promptly issue visas to the representatives of Member States.

Lastly, the composition of the Office for Disarmament Affairs should reflect an equitable representation of the international community. We place significant importance on the United Nations fellowship programmes related to disarmament processes.

In conclusion, we emphasize the critical importance of multilateral diplomacy in disarmament and non-proliferation efforts and call upon all nations to demonstrate the necessary political will to advance towards a world free from the threat of nuclear weapons.

**Ms. Greve** (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): I would like to raise three points regarding the disarmament mechanism.

In his New Agenda for Peace, the Secretary-General emphasizes the need to strengthen the disarmament mechanism established by the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, including the Conference on Disarmament (CD) and the Disarmament Commission. We fully echo his position given the fact that the various bodies that constitute the mechanism are struggling to provide a response to many of the international security and disarmament challenges.

The deadlock affecting the Conference on Disarmament is a particular source of concern. For more than 25 years now, that forum has not been able to adopt or implement a programme of work and move forward on substantive issues. While we continue to hope that

the CD will be able to overcome its paralysis, there is nothing to suggest that it is heading in that direction. Indeed, for the first time this year, the CD was unable to agree on the participation of non-member States in its work. The situation is especially unacceptable given that there are a number of issues on the Conference's agenda that directly concern all States Members of the United Nations.

We also believe that there is room for reflection on the relationships among the various components of the disarmament mechanism in order to define whether it is functioning optimally or whether adjustments or modifications should be made. As the Secretary-General has underlined, that is essential in order to gradually build consensus on evolving disarmament priorities and review and make recommendations on developments in science and technology and their potential impact on disarmament and international security.

In that context, it would be appropriate to assess whether the activities and roles of those different components are complementary and whether they interact as stipulated in the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly on disarmament (resolution S/10-2). That document indicates, in particular, that the CD must take into account the recommendations made to it by the General Assembly when drawing up its agenda — a provision that we invite the Conference to fully implement.

In view of those considerations, we believe it is appropriate to eventually put in place a process enabling an in-depth evaluation of the functioning of the disarmament mechanism. We are open as to the form that such an exercise should take and the institutional framework in which it should occur. We also note that any forum or mechanism should be subject to regular evaluation of its functioning. Such an approach would make it possible to identify the necessary modifications to the existing process and structures and the most appropriate way to achieve them in a calm manner.

**Mr. Bencini** (Italy): Italy aligns itself with the statements delivered by the representative of the European Union and by the representative of Ireland, on gender, on behalf of a group of countries (see A/C.1/78/PV.22).

I would like to add some remarks in my national capacity.

We are deeply concerned about the deteriorating security environment and the continued erosion of the international arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation architecture. Russia's brutal invasion of Ukraine has further exacerbated that situation.

Italy believes that there is no alternative to the multilateral system if we want to tackle today's global problems effectively, including those of arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation. Italy remains firmly committed to preserving and strengthening the multilateral disarmament architecture and all relevant treaties and conventions, with the aim of their universalization. We value the debate on the revitalization and strengthening of the disarmament machinery and support the convening, at the appropriate time and with modalities to be defined, of a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament.

While, at this point in time, it is unrealistic to embark on a wide restructuring of the disarmament machinery, we believe that we should at least begin to discuss the feasibility of certain ideas so that, when the time comes, we will be prepared if we agree to implement them.

Italy believes that we should first aim to harmonize and streamline the entire disarmament machinery. To begin with, we should look at the respective mandates of the Conference on Disarmament (CD) and the Disarmament Commission and review them accordingly in order to create a coherent system, while bearing in mind their different natures as a negotiating body and a deliberative body, respectively.

We favour greater interaction among the General Assembly, the First Committee and the Conference on Disarmament. The CD should take into full and serious consideration the recommendations emanating from the General Assembly. On the other hand, the General Assembly should pay more attention and give more consideration to CD reports. The Chair of the First Committee and the chairs of the various open-ended working groups and groups of governmental experts could brief the CD on the work of the respective bodies in interactive meetings. Furthermore, every disarmament body should interact more and better with the rest of the United Nations system, but also with civil society and the private sector.

Italy would like to highlight the seriousness of the financial difficulties affecting the disarmament

conventions, which hamper the proper functioning of the disarmament machinery. While we are open to any new proposal or measure to ensure financially sound management, we believe that the only sustainable option is to address non-payment. As long as there are arrears, financial problems will persist. We call upon States to pay their dues on time and in full, as that is a legal obligation, and to settle all outstanding debts to the instruments concerned as soon as possible.

Across all those issues, Italy believes that greater interaction with civil society will bring a key contribution to the entire disarmament machinery. Italy promotes policies and approaches that enable the full empowerment of women and take into due account the gendered impacts of armed violence and the importance of including women in disarmament negotiations and peacebuilding programmes.

**Mr. Fetz (Canada):** Canada strongly supports multilateralism and the rules-based international order, which is fundamental to international peace and security. Canada is deeply troubled by the flagrant disregard of the most basic rules of international law, including the prohibition against the use of force set out in the Charter of the United Nations and the lack of respect for international humanitarian law by Russia in Ukraine. Likewise, Canada is concerned about the attempts by some States to erode international disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation instruments. We call on Russia to reverse its purported suspension of the Treaty between the United States of America and the Russian Federation on Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms (New START Treaty) and the steps taken to withdraw its ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. It is imperative to resume the full implementation of the New START Treaty, and we urge Russia to accept the invitation of the United States to engage in talks with a view to securing a follow-up treaty before the 2026 expiry of the New START Treaty. Canada also calls on China to work with Russia and the United States on reducing global nuclear weapon stockpiles and rebuilding the global disarmament architecture.

After three decades of deadlock, the Conference on Disarmament (CD) is in urgent need of revitalization. Its failure on a number of fronts calls into serious question the Organization's ability to fulfil its mandate. Notably, that includes the failures to agree on a programme of work, accept any observer States this year, update its rules of procedure to make them



inclusive of men and women and have formal plenary discussions on revitalizing the body. If the CD cannot muster enough energy to agree on basic procedural issues, how can it possibly negotiate substantive disarmament instruments?

The tense international security environment and the lack of political will are key elements in blocking progress in the CD, but the CD's working methods have also contributed to the stalemate. Over time, some States have interpreted the principle of consensus as an entitlement of every member to veto any procedural and substantive matter. Consensus has never been intended to create a *de facto* veto. The CD's agenda has been interpreted very narrowly by some States and has not been updated for decades. As a result, the CD spends an extraordinary amount of time discussing procedural hurdles rather than substantive issues at the negotiating table.

Canada is grateful to the French and German CD presidencies for organizing a retreat and plenary discussions on CD revitalization this year. In that context, the report of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research on revitalizing the CD outlines a series of small steps, long strides and major reforms for States' consideration to reinvigorate the CD. Another paper proposing constructive changes was issued by the United States and is entitled "Seeking a More Effective and Efficient Conference on Disarmament".

*(spoke in French)*

The CD and Disarmament Commission have different mandates, but, in practice, deliberative and negotiation functions should reinforce each other. It is worthwhile to examine how best to achieve that, and we welcome the impetus given by the Secretary-General's New Agenda for Peace. Moreover, opening CD membership to all interested States should be considered, given the interest that all States have in disarmament matters. Such issues as conventional weapons, outer space, artificial intelligence and even weapons of mass destruction are a concern for all States, not just the members of the Conference on Disarmament. The negotiation of treaties based on broad participation is a routine multilateral practice, and the CD's limited membership is not the norm. Indeed, broader and more inclusive participation remains a core priority for Canada, particularly when it comes to strengthening and integrating gender perspectives across the disarmament machinery. We continue to

call for the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in all aspects of arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament.

**Mr. Turner** (United States of America): The United States has always believed that the disarmament tools at our common disposal are adequate and appropriate. Still, we believe that they can be made more efficient and effective. That is why we have circulated several modest ideas for improving the working methods of the Conference on Disarmament without altering the rules of procedure.

We recognize that it is difficult in the current tense and competitive geopolitical environment to make rapid or substantial progress. That said, the current state of affairs traces its roots not to the existing disarmament machinery, which, in fact, has shown itself to be as flexible in coming up with creative formats for grappling with emerging technologies as it was effective in the past in the negotiation of major treaties dealing with chemical and biological weapons. The fault lies elsewhere.

Our world today is characterized by tumult, competition and potential conflict among shifting powers, in which the status quo ante no longer completely obtains. The measure of power is also being transformed from a purely military concept to a more integrated one that combines economic, technological and scientific prowess. We must contend not only with the issues of nuclear and conventional weapons, but also revolutionary technological developments that could change the face of warfare. This new world mixes elements of the old and familiar with the new and unfamiliar, where the potential advantages and disadvantages, or benefits and hazards, are still hard to appreciate. We know that things are changing, in some cases dramatically, but it is difficult to predict exactly how. To our mind, that argues in favour of preserving the structures we have, while working to adapt them to new circumstances and realities.

At the same time, some of our current problems go far beyond any inadequacies in our disarmament machinery or even the reluctance of one or more States to engage in specific negotiations. One country, in particular, is acting as a wrecking ball, threatening to bring down the entire disarmament house in the name of its immediate geopolitical goals. In effect, that country is attempting to hold hostage the entire United Nations system and, with it, the multilateral arms

control and disarmament order. I am referring to the systematic attempt by Russia this past year to destroy through procedural obstruction what it cannot gain through diplomatic engagement. Where it cannot win on the merits of its arguments, often because they lack merit, it attempts to exploit the rules of procedure as a way to obstruct progress while shirking responsibility for the results. This is a game of using and abusing the rules of procedure to challenge every proposal, as well as the prerogatives of the chairpersons, in order to veto anything with which Russia does not explicitly agree.

During the recent Preparatory Committee for the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, Russia colluded with one or two others to prevent the issuance of the procedural report of the meeting. In the Conference on Disarmament — most egregiously in 2022 — Russia has consistently insisted that meetings on subjects with which it disagrees be held in informal format in order to keep them out of the official records. In the recent Open-ended Working Group (OEWG) on Reducing Space Threats through Norms, Rules and Principles of Responsible Behaviours, Russia blocked the substantive report and the procedural report of the meeting. In effect, Russia attempted to erase the very existence of a process that had lasted nearly two years.

We found out why when Russia circulated its most recent draft resolution on the prevention of an arms race in outer space only one or two days after the United Kingdom had circulated a draft resolution on continuing the OEWG process supported by so many other States. Russia aims to usurp and supplant the OEWG process and railroad future discussions toward its preferred outcome of a treaty on the prevention of placement of weapons in outer space. The problem is that this treaty is built on a false premise and complete fiction — as Russia has already demonstrated on several occasions — that such weapons do not already exist.

The United States believes that nations must show a minimum willingness to act in good faith — including by ceasing the growing practice of offering hostile amendments to others' draft resolutions — if we are to make good use of the disarmament machinery available to us. Censoring those who disagree with us is not the appropriate way to reach common understandings on the way forward. It is also not appropriate to exclude half the world's population from these important discussions, and we should push actively for women's full participation in the disarmament machinery.

Extortion should have no place in our multilateral institutions, lest we destroy the very tools we will want to reach for in the future.

The United States will continue to engage realistically and responsibly, defending our interests and listening to others, with the aim of finding common ground that will enable us all to move forward together to meet our growing challenges and enhance our common security.

**Mr. Sher (India):** The United Nations, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, has a central role and the primary responsibility in the context of international peace and security. India is committed to multilateralism and the ideals enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. A reformed and effective United Nations, we believe, is essential for it to successfully discharge its mandated functions.

India attaches high priority to the work of the United Nations disarmament machinery, as laid out by the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, with the triad composed of the Conference on Disarmament (CD), the First Committee and the Disarmament Commission, which continue to be the ideal forums for deliberation and negotiation on matters related to disarmament and international security.

India attaches importance to the Conference on Disarmament as the world's single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum. The CD has the mandate, the membership and the rules for negotiating legally binding instruments on the core items under its agenda. As we know, despite its best efforts, the CD has not been able to adopt a programme of work in its recent past. We believe that instead of questioning the relevance and effectiveness of the CD, States must demonstrate political will and focus their efforts on the CD's negotiating mandate. For its part, India has expressed its readiness and commitment to work with other Member States on all core items on the CD's agenda, including a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices on the basis of CD/1299 and the mandate contained therein.

India is pleased that this year, the Disarmament Commission was able to successfully adopt consensus recommendations in order to promote the practical implementation of transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space. As the

main deliberative body within the United Nations on disarmament issues, the Commission's role as a platform for dialogue and cooperation, bringing together the universal membership of all Member States, cannot be understated. The Commission has made several important achievements in its past, having successfully adopted several notable guidelines and recommendations. India attaches high importance to the Disarmament Commission's work and looks forward to its discussions as it commences a new cycle next year.

India also looks forward to the convening of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. We believe that it can potentially be a useful opportunity to take stock of the progress made in the disarmament machinery and to look at ways to further revitalize it. India also values the important efforts and publications by the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research in various areas of its work. India's annual Disarmament and International Security Affairs Fellowship reflects the importance we attach to promoting disarmament education. Earlier this year, India held the third iteration of the Fellowship, in which young diplomats from 30 countries attended the programme.

The First Committee was mandated by the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament to deal with questions relating to international peace and security. It is an important platform that brings together all Member States. India hopes that our work this year at the First Committee will further contribute to the disarmament machinery in its pursuit of collective solutions on matters related to disarmament and international security. India stands ready to contribute to that process and work with fellow Member States in our collective endeavour to safeguard global peace and security.

**Mr. Shen Jian (China)** (*spoke in Chinese*): The international security situation is undergoing profound and complex changes, with some countries contributing to major Power competition and bloc confrontation. The multilateral disarmament machinery is facing unprecedented pressure, and the international arms control and non-proliferation system is confronting severe challenges. The Conference on Disarmament (CD) has been in a prolonged deadlock, and discussions in the Disarmament Commission have made no substantive progress. The willingness for consensus in the First Committee has further decreased, and

parallel processes continue to emerge. The first session of the Preparatory Committee for the eleventh Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons failed to make any real progress, and the fifth Special Session of the Conference of the States Parties to Review the Operation of the Chemical Weapons Convention concluded without an outcome.

The CD continued to hold substantive discussions on all disarmament agenda items in plenary meetings this year and reached consensus on its annual report. The Disarmament Commission adopted recommendations on outer space by consensus this year. The ninth Review Conference of the Biological Weapons Convention adopted a final document. The relevant Groups of Governmental Experts under the United Nations framework have also achieved positive results. China welcomes those examples of progress.

For a long time, the multilateral disarmament machinery and relevant convention mechanisms have played a vital role in maintaining the stability of the international security order and promoting the international arms control and non-proliferation processes. Under the current circumstances, the multilateral disarmament machinery should be strengthened rather than weakened. It is important to draw on experiences and lessons in the field of disarmament over the past year.

First, we should uphold a proper vision of security. The multilateral disarmament machinery should be a platform to promote common security rather than a battlefield for political confrontation. All parties should uphold a vision of common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security and fully respect the security concerns of all States on the basis of equality, mutual benefit and win-win cooperation. All parties should adopt a constructive and professional approach to strengthening communication and dialogue, enhancing trust, reducing misunderstandings and building consensus in order to create new momentum for the revitalization of the machinery.

Secondly, we should have firm confidence in the existing disarmament machinery. The machinery does not work in a vacuum. We cannot blame the machinery itself or its rules of procedure for the current problems. Still less should anyone attempt to undermine the existing machinery or start a new one. The CD adopted a simplified programme of work by consensus last year,

and the Disarmament Commission made progress on the outer space agenda this year. Those facts demonstrate that resolving the dilemma facing the machinery is not an impossible mission. The solution is to uphold true multilateralism, display full political will and respect the legitimate security concerns of all States. We should enhance mutual trust, bridge differences through sincere dialogue and try to broaden common ground in the spirit of consensus. At the same time, the international community should oppose any selective and utilitarian approach and firmly uphold the authority of the multilateral disarmament machinery.

Thirdly, we should actively respond to new issues and new challenges. At present, traditional security issues and emerging security challenges are intertwined. Emerging technologies and their military applications are having a profound impact on the global strategic security landscape. As a result, the scope of multilateral disarmament and arms control is gradually expanding. The multilateral disarmament machinery needs to work on traditional items, pursuant to its mandate, and also keep pace with the times on the basis of discussion and consensus. It needs to work on new security topics at appropriate times in order to properly address all kinds of new threats and challenges.

The New Agenda for Peace recently launched by the Secretary-General, which includes a new vision for disarmament, is of great significance for strengthening the role of the United Nations as the main channel for arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation, and revitalizing the multilateral disarmament process. China appreciates the efforts made by the United Nations and the Secretary-General. China stands ready to work with all parties to uphold the vision and to work tirelessly to maintain the strength of the multilateral disarmament machinery and promote the international arms control and disarmament processes.

**Mr. Sarwani** (Pakistan): We align ourselves with the statement delivered by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/78/PV.22).

The stalemate afflicting the multilateral disarmament machinery is both a cause and function of competing strategic priorities, the relentless pursuit of maintaining military advantages and the pursuit of discriminatory policies by some States. Currently, the level of trust and understanding among States to negotiate arms control rules are even lower than during

the cold war. With conflicts raging in many parts of the world and festering long-standing disputes, the strategic environment has deteriorated further. It is no wonder that the States are unable to negotiate on matters that directly pertain to their security.

Nonetheless, the arms control machinery remains sound in its design, procedures and methods of work. After all, the same machinery was able to conclude several landmark treaties during the cold war, when fundamental principles were adhered to. We have seen well-meaning calls for revitalization of the disarmament machinery. What is often presumed in this narrative is the assumption that the working methods limit the forging of an agreement. That is at best an oversimplification. That belief tends to ignore the fundamental security interests that States are obliged to defend. Changing our working practices will not affect the national security calculus of States, on the basis of which they take certain positions. Trying to find a procedural fix for a substantive security problem will therefore not break that logjam. What is required instead is to undertake a realistic appraisal of security requirements in the face of threat assessments in a given regional and global strategic environment. What is also essential is the recognition of the principle of equal and undiminished security for all States.

As the world's single multilateral disarmament negotiating body, the Conference on Disarmament (CD) is an integral and vital part of the United Nations disarmament machinery. The strength of the CD lies in the fact that all militarily significant States participate in it on an equal footing and are able to protect their vital security interests under the consensus rule. Those attributes are indispensable for any forum dealing with disarmament and security issues. Like other bodies, the CD has also been impacted by the dynamics of the external environment. Some States continue to oppose the commencement of negotiations on nuclear disarmament, placement of weapons in outer space, negative security assurances and even proposals for new treaties simply because they clash with their strategic calculus. On the other hand, some of those very same States champion cost-free and inherently discriminatory proposals that they know will naturally be rejected by States whose security such initiatives undermine.

The challenges confronting the disarmament machinery are not exclusive to the CD. The First Committee, the Disarmament Commission and different working groups have been facing similar



obstacles. Overcoming this impasse in the multilateral disarmament machinery remains a challenging task. However, seeking pathways outside established forums, especially when pursued on a non-consensual basis and without the participation of all stakeholders, would be even more counterproductive. Pakistan has therefore been calling for a revival of arms control consensus, anchored in faithful adherence to and respect for international law, based on non-discrimination and centred around the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD-I).

Renewing consensus on arms control and disarmament could also be accomplished through convening the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. However, simply convening such a forum would not be enough. We must also learn from the lessons of the past. We need to examine why SSOD-II and SSOD-III were unable to enjoy the same level of success as SSOD-I. Any partial solutions that only address some of the symptoms and not the causes are unlikely to work. In any new approach, we must start from the same basic premise, namely, recognition of the right to equal security for all States — both in conventional and non-conventional fields, as well as at the regional and international levels.

**Mr. Floyd** (United Kingdom): The first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD-I), held in 1978, lamented that in spite of the best efforts of the international community, adequate results had not been achieved with the existing machinery. Given that within the preceding decade both the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention had entered into force, what would the negotiators of SSOD-I have made of the failure of the machinery they created to produce new treaties since 1996?

It is true that the Disarmament Commission has reached some important understandings since then, and we welcome the fact that the Commission completed its three-year cycle by reaching consensus recommendations on the implementation of transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space this year. But the work of the Conference on Disarmament (CD) — despite the best efforts of successive presidencies to structure its work so as to lead it back to formal negotiations — has not lived up to its promise. This year's session yielded some useful discussions that have improved the membership's

engagement on the substantive issues on its agenda. But the impasse on launching new negotiations persists. We also lament the failure by the Conference to admit observers for its 2023 session, due to the insistence by Russia that the applications be considered on by one, contrary to the practice of adopting the whole list that was re-established by the Chinese presidency in 2022. While the SSOD-I recognized the convenience of a negotiating body of limited membership, the CD's continued legitimacy rests on its transparency and inclusivity regarding the rest of the United Nations membership. We hope that this situation does not repeat itself in 2024.

While the disarmament machinery — like the rest of the multilateral system — is far from perfect, it is the best we have. It is not because of the rules of procedure of this or that body, or whether it meets in New York or in Geneva, that we have failed to make meaningful progress on disarmament and arms control, but because of the prevailing climate of deep mistrust among States, the bad faith of some delegations, the abuse of the practice of consensus and our collective failure to identify our common interest in further strengthening and developing the disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation architecture.

The United Kingdom supports, in principle, the calling of a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament in order to forge a new global consensus on the role that disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation can play in supporting international peace and security in the twenty-first century, to set a broad vision for what we collectively wish to achieve and, finally, to overhaul the machinery through which we will make that vision a reality. But the moment when such a special session could realistically achieve that, in our view, does not seem to have arrived.

In the meantime, we continue to welcome initiatives and proposals on making the machinery more streamlined and fit for purpose, while remaining true to the principles that underpin it. The Working Group on Strengthening the Review Process of the NPT produced many excellent proposals to improve the effectiveness, efficiency, coordination, continuity and, above all, transparency and accountability of the review process, and we hope that this work can continue through the remainder of this review cycle.

The Working Group on the Strengthening of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention, established by the ninth Review Conference of the Parties to the Convention, has also already made progress towards the establishment of mechanisms on international cooperation and assistance and on scientific and technological developments, both of which would strengthen that Convention. And we welcome the initiative of the French and German presidencies of the CD, with the assistance of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, to inject renewed impetus into the long-standing discussion on the improved and effective functioning of the Conference by convening a retreat on the revitalization of the CD.

We urge all States to continue to engage constructively with the disarmament machinery for the purpose for which it was intended and in good faith in the coming year.

**Ms. Gohiwar Aryal (Nepal):** Nepal aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/78/PV.22).

The current security challenges warrant stronger multilateralism in which all countries fulfil their obligations and resolve to work for a safer world. A strong and functioning disarmament machinery is essential to steer us through the current challenges and risks resulting from the growing geopolitical competition.

We are gravely concerned about the minimal progress in the field of disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control. The continued stalemate at the Conference of Disarmament has undermined its credibility and stability. We can see the lack of trust and inaction extended to the Disarmament Commission, the Review Conferences of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and to the First Committee itself, with a number of competing resolutions. While we welcome the report of the Disarmament Commission on promoting transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space, we regret the lack of consensus on the Working Group on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

We consider the NPT to be the cornerstone of nuclear disarmament and look forward to its eleventh Review Conference with much hope and optimism. We, the Member States, can still make the correct choices to transcend the differences by building trust and

confidence so that the disarmament machinery delivers on its agreed mandates.

Nepal has remained a strong supporter of regional disarmament architecture. In that regard, Nepal recognizes the role of the United Nations regional centres for peace and disarmament in promoting national, regional and subregional disarmament priorities, supporting the specific needs of countries and fostering cooperation among them. As host to one of the United Nations regional centres, Nepal attests to their contribution to confidence-building, capacity-building, awareness-raising and implementing disarmament instruments, as well as their potential to help develop a common regional approach to disarmament and non-proliferation. They have provided a permanent platform for constant dialogue and for exchanges of views and best practices. Such dialogues and discussions will eventually contribute to global disarmament efforts. Regional centres should be further strengthened, well-resourced and developed as repositories of best practices of regional disarmament efforts.

Since the late 1980s, Nepal has partnered with the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific in organizing regional meetings and dialogue under the Kathmandu process. We are committed to resuming this process in order to foster confidence and common understanding for peace and disarmament in the region and beyond. We recognize that the Centre lacks adequate resources to implement activities mandated by the General Assembly. We therefore call on all Member States and non-governmental organizations to make voluntary contributions to the Centre so as to ensure its effective operation.

Under the cluster “Disarmament machinery”, in our capacity as host country, Nepal submitted draft resolution A/C.1/78/L.22, on the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific, as it does every year, for the consideration of the Committee. We thank the Member States that have already co-sponsored the draft resolution and request others to follow suit. We are confident that we will continue receiving valuable support from all delegations for the adoption of this draft resolution by consensus.

**Mr. Lebbaz (Algeria):** Once again, for the second time today, my delegation reiterates its strong

condemnation of the attacks of the occupation forces against the Palestinian civilian population, which is being indiscriminately bombed continuously, resulting in thousands of innocent victims, the majority of whom are children, women and the elderly. We call once more for the immediate cessation of those attacks, without preconditions.

My delegation aligns itself with the statements delivered earlier on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and the Group of Arab States (see A/C.1/78/PV.22).

My delegation stresses the importance of preserving existing disarmament agreements and multilateral disarmament forums, which embody the achievements of international cooperation and multilateral negotiations over past decades in addressing the challenges facing humankind. Seeking solutions and agreements within the framework of multilateralism, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, is the only sustainable way to address issues relating to disarmament and international security.

Disarmament forums provide States with the opportunity for consultation and cooperation with other States and for resolving any problems that could arise within the framework of the United Nations and in accordance with its Charter. In general, that will help promote international cooperation, the peaceful settlement of disputes, as well as dialogue and confidence-building measures, thus contributing to strengthening friendly multilateral relations among States and peoples. In that context, my delegation stresses the importance of the multilateral disarmament machinery, comprising the Conference on Disarmament, the only multilateral disarmament negotiating forum; the Disarmament Commission, the universal deliberative body and a subsidiary body of the General Assembly; and the First Committee.

We believe it is important to maintain and strengthen the role and mandate of all United Nations disarmament mechanisms. We believe that the stalemate in those mechanisms is due to the lack of the necessary political will to advance along the path towards disarmament, especially nuclear disarmament, rather than to the performance of those mechanisms or their working methods and procedural rules.

Algeria welcomes the convening of the substantive session of the Disarmament Commission in 2023 and the adoption of the Commission's 2023 report

(A/78/42), which includes recommendations to promote the practical implementation of transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities. Promoting political will is required at the level of the Conference on Disarmament, which has not been able to deliver on the negotiating mandate entrusted to it for more than 24 years now. We therefore call on all Conference members to facilitate its work by agreeing on a balanced and comprehensive programme of work that addresses all items on its agenda, foremost of which is nuclear disarmament.

**The Chair:** I shall now give the floor to the delegations that requested the floor in the exercise of the right of reply.

I would like to remind delegations that statements in the exercise of the right of reply are limited to five minutes for the first intervention and three minutes for the second intervention.

**Mr. Fetz (Canada):** Canada would like to reply to some of the unbalanced statements made by some delegations in respect of the conflict taking place in the Middle East.

Canada unequivocally condemns the brutal terrorist attacks perpetrated by Hamas against Israel. Nothing can justify these acts of terror and the killing, maiming and abduction of civilians. Canada stands with Israel and fully supports Israel's right to defend itself, in accordance with international law. Canada also calls for the immediate release of those being held hostage and demands that hostages and all civilians be treated humanely, in accordance with international law.

*(spoke in French)*

We are deeply concerned about the humanitarian situation in Gaza and its impact on civilians. Rapid and unhindered access to humanitarian aid for civilians is crucial. Canada will continue to call upon all parties to protect civilians and uphold international humanitarian law. Health and humanitarian personnel and facilities must be protected in all circumstances.

Canada firmly supports the Israeli and Palestinian peoples' right to live in peace and security, in dignity and without fear. Canada is committed to the two-State solution. We must return to a framework that guarantees dignity and just and lasting peace.

**Mr. Shen Jian (China) *(spoke in Chinese)*:** In his statement this morning, the representative of the United

States levelled unjustified accusations against China with regard to the Taiwan question and our nuclear policy. China firmly opposes and categorically rejects those accusations.

Fifty-two years ago today, on 25 October 1971, the twenty-sixth session of the General Assembly adopted resolution 2758 (XXVI) by an overwhelming majority, deciding, in explicit terms,

“to restore all its rights to the People’s Republic of China and to recognize the representatives of its Government as the only legitimate representatives of China to the United Nations” (*fourth preambular paragraph*).

The Taiwan question is entirely an internal affair of China and does not allow for any external interference. China firmly opposes the United States’ manipulation of the Taiwan question and its provocation of confrontation in the region. Taiwan is China’s Taiwan, and resolving the Taiwan question is a matter for the Chinese people. We strive for peaceful reunification with the greatest sincerity and our utmost efforts, but we will never allow interference in China’s internal affairs by anyone or any force under the pretext of peace.

The greatest threat to cross-strait peace is Taiwan independence forces, which are condoned and backed by foreign forces. If the United States really cares about peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait, then it should abide by the one-China principle, stop condoning or aiding and abetting Taiwan independence separatist forces and their activities and take concrete actions to preserve regional peace and stability.

The United States keeps hyping China’s nuclear policy, when really it is the United States that is obsessively invested in the cold war mentality and great Power competitions, treating China as a rival to serve its global and regional security strategies in order to justify the expansion of its military power and to cling to its global hegemony. Regarding China’s nuclear policy, China has already given a comprehensive account in its statement on nuclear weapons (see A/C.1/78/PV.11).

China’s limited nuclear deterrent capability is for the sole purpose of deterring countries from attempts to use nuclear weapons against China. China is committed to the policy of no-first-use of nuclear weapons and has always maintained its nuclear forces at the lowest level required for its national security. That is fair and above board and fully transparent.

China is committed to peaceful development, follows an independent foreign policy of peace and values a cultural tradition that prizes peace. That dictates that we consistently pursue a national defence policy that is defensive in nature and aimed at resolutely safeguarding China’s national sovereignty, security and development interests. China will never seek hegemony, never pursue expansionism and never seek to establish a sphere of influence.

With regard to its statements, the United States should do some soul-searching and abandon its cold war mentality and its obsession with great Power competition. It should stop meddling in China’s internal affairs and take more actions conducive to regional peace and stability, including by meaningfully responding to the concerns of the international community.

**Mr. Sharoni (Israel):** I am compelled to take the floor regarding references concerning my country made yesterday and today by the representative of Jordan on behalf of the Group of Arab States (see A/C.1/78/PV.21 and A/C.1/78/PV.22), as well as allegations made by the representative of Iran.

I once again urge members of the Arab Group to condemn the terrorist attack by Hamas terrorists against Israel and to call for the immediate release of all hostages. Terrorist organizations such as Hamas and the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham (ISIS) threaten the entire Middle East region, not just Israel. Their silence is deafening.

Actions speak louder than words, and Iran’s actions are deplorable. Unstable at home and hated abroad, it arms dozens of terrorist groups and threatens global peace and security. It murders protesters, executes women for having a voice and hangs minorities.

Since we spoke this morning on regional issues (see A/C.1/78/PV.22), let us all have a sincere look at the real threats to security and stability in the Middle East. The representative of the Iranian regime claimed earlier that his country maintains cordial relations with its neighbours. I would like to dive for a second into that so-called cordial approach.

In Syria, Iran protects the murderous Al-Assad regime, which is responsible for the death of more than 300,000 civilians, including by using chemical weapons against its own population.

The Iranian regime controls Lebanon by training and arming Hizbullah, thus subcontracting the



terrorizing of the Lebanese population. Under Iran's guidance, assistance and financing, Hizbullah continues to build an enormous weapons arsenal that includes hundreds of thousands of missiles and thousands of precision-guided munitions, all waiting for Nasrallah and Tehran to decide on the next opportunity to bring total disaster to Lebanon and its people.

The Iranian-backed Hizbullah also coordinates closely with Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad and has launched dozens of coordinated attacks on Israel over the past couple of weeks. All such acts are in clear violation of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006).

Iran controls Iraq through various paramilitary groups who make sure that nothing happens there without their master's approval. Iran also controls parts of war-torn Yemen for the Houthi terrorist movement. "God is the greatest, death to America, death to Israel, a curse upon the Jews, victory to Islam" — that is the Houthi slogan.

And of course, Hamas and ISIS are in Gaza, where Iran provides that murderous organization with annual funds of \$100 million. Those funds and that Iranian money is not aimed at building schools or hospitals. Those Iranian funds are meant for supporting the Hamas terrorist organization and maintaining its cynical abuse of the people of Gaza.

One cannot speak of regional stability in the Middle East without recognizing the reality on the ground. The simple truth is that Iran's very presence in this room is a declaration of its utter disdain for this institution, as well as other similar arms control and disarmament forums. Given Iran's tentacles of terror across the Middle East, we will continue to uphold the duty of protecting our citizens, whether from attacks orchestrated by the Islamic Republic of Iran or other malicious terrorist organizations in the Middle East.

Finally, since the delegation of a neighbouring country of mine decided to turn clusters 6 and 7 on the Committee's agenda into cluster 1, namely, the nuclear cluster, I want to repeat what we have already said before. The 1999 report of the Disarmament Commission (A/54/42), on guidelines and principles for the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones states, clearly that such zones should be established on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among States of the region concerned and pursued by all the States of that region. Ill-motivated initiatives, such as the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone

Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction, go against Disarmament Commission guidelines and the established principles of any nuclear-weapon-free zone and are unhelpful.

**Mr. Gurbanov** (Azerbaijan): My delegation takes the floor in exercise of its right of reply to address the false statements made today by, as usual, the representative of Armenia (see A/C.1/78/PV.22).

It is obvious that the representative of Armenia once again attempted to advance its false narrative by simultaneously ignoring and denying their country's own decades-long violation of international law and, apparently, disregarding the ongoing diplomatic efforts towards the normalization of relations between our States.

Let us be clear about who actually violated the principles of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe and breached their commitments under the relevant arms control regimes, the Vienna Document 2011 on Confidence- and Security-Building Measures and their obligations under the Charter of the United Nations.

The anti-terror measures Azerbaijan carried out on 19 and 20 September, which Armenia has tried to misrepresent here, successfully achieved its disarmament objectives. Those measures consequently led to the disarming, disbanding and withdrawal of the remnants of the Armenia's armed forces and its illegal armed formations from the Nagorno-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan, which the Republic of Armenia had been supplying for the past three decades. It also led to the dissolution of the illegal puppet regime once established by Armenia in my country's internationally recognized territory.

It also reaffirmed yet again the fact of the illegal presence of Armenia's armed forces on Azerbaijan's sovereign territory and the continued militarization of those areas through the illegal transfer of weapons and ammunition from Armenia after the signing of the 10 November 2020 trilateral statement.

Militarization at such a scale, in particular the deployment of offensive weapons with a high devastation capability and the planting of landmines, demonstrate that Armenia was not sincere in those negotiations and was not pursuing a peaceful settlement of those issues. Instead, it continued to rely on the illegal use of force. Moreover, the number of weapons

seized from the armed forces of Armenia in the Nagorno-Karabakh region significantly surpassed even our initial assessment regarding the extent of the illegal militarization of that region.

Another of Armenia's aims here is to whitewash its war crimes after having manifested itself as a mine terror against my country. The landmines previously planted by the reconnaissance-subversion group of Armenia's armed forces in the Nagorno-Karabakh region killed two civilians and six military personnel in September, rendering Azerbaijan's counter-terror measures inevitable. The area where the mine explosion took place in September has been used regularly by Azerbaijan before. It leaves no room for doubt that the mines were replanted by the Armenian sabotage group infiltrated into the area at that time. Such facts are a testimony to the ongoing deliberate and planned policy of mine terror by Armenia against Azerbaijan, in violation of international humanitarian law.

We believe all those were not isolated episodes, but rather another link in the chain of destabilizing actions by Armenia over the past months in an apparent effort to attempt another military adventure. For that purpose, Armenia was disseminating disinformation to create the prerequisites for further provocations and thereby attempting to form a false opinion in the international community. Moreover, such actions of Armenia testify to the fact that Armenia did not cease its territorial claims against Azerbaijan, and its current narrative and actions on the ground contradict its recent verbal recognition of Azerbaijan's territorial integrity.

We reiterate that, during the anti-terror measures in September, only long-term battle positions, combat equipment and military infrastructure were neutralized, despite the fact that the formations of the Armenian armed forces deployed combat equipment in or around civilian settlements.

In connection with the allegations of targeting civilians, unlike Armenia, Azerbaijan has never used force against the civilian population. On the contrary, we declared measures to reintegrate Armenian residents of the Garabagh region into our society. Despite the obstacles put by Armenia and its former puppet regime, we are determined in that regard.

**Mr. In Chol Kim** (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): My delegation is taking the floor in response to the provocative statement made by the representative of the United States this morning (see A/C.1/78/PV.22). We

categorically reject the unfounded and unsubstantiated allegations of the United States against my country. The groundless allegations of the United States are a grave political provocation aimed at demonizing and tarnishing the international image of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, a dignified United Nations Member State, as well as a disinformation campaign to divert international attention from its anti-humanity and anti-peace crimes.

Since its very foundation, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has invariably adhered to the principle of building up its national defence capabilities with its own efforts and technology. In doing so, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's national defence industry has grown enough to be able to develop and manufacture any kind of advanced armament on its own will in the face of the protracted confrontation with the United States. Make no mistake — the failure of the United States policy towards the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is attributable to its failure to understand the Korean people's indomitable will to defend their fatherland and their unwavering spirit of self-reliance and self-development.

Currently, the United States is groundlessly claiming that the development of good neighbourly relations between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the Russian Federation is a violation of United Nations resolutions and international law in an attempt to mislead global public opinion, as if the cooperation between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and Russia posed a threat to global peace and security. That is a clear expression of the United States' way of thinking, which is oriented towards hegemony and based on Cold War confrontational logic.

And like the United States sophism, the United States-led alliance, which is assuming a more evidently aggressive and exclusive tone and is constantly threatening the security environment of independent sovereign States, is engaging in increasingly dangerous relations. The United States-Japan-South Korea triangular military alliance, which has clearly shown hostility towards the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and neighbouring countries, and NATO, the mastermind of the Ukrainian crisis, are just cancer-like entities, jeopardizing the international order based on the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, and pose a graver threat to global peace and security.

The United States, which prioritizes the nexus with its allies to maintain its hegemony, has neither the qualifications nor a justification to find fault with the enhancement of unity and solidarity between the independent and sovereign States which are subject to real threats from it. The United States now asserts that it does not want a direct conflict with Russia, but in reality, it leaves no stone unturned in its effort to strategically defeat Russia and maintain military hegemony over the whole world. In addition to cluster bombs and depleted uranium ammunitions, the recent provision of tanks to Ukraine is motivated by the United States senior leaders' intention to deplete and weaken the overall national capabilities of European countries by prolonging the proxy war for Ukraine and ultimately make them more firmly dependent on it. The outlook for a solution to the Ukrainian crisis is getting bleaker, and the world has moved closer to an unprecedented war of great magnitude owing to the selfish and anti-peaceful acts of the United States, which seeks only hegemonic interests and is utterly indifferent to global peace and stability.

The independent and righteous international community is strongly denouncing and urging the immediate revocation of the provision of lethal weapons by the United States, which is fuelling the most disastrous war on all humankind. We do not feel the need to engage in dialogue with the United States, which repeatedly calls for the end of the regime and the overthrow of the system. We will continue to take bold countermeasures in a more offensive fashion until it has no choice but to acknowledge that it will not benefit from its hostile policy towards the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and how dangerous its pursuit of confrontation with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is.

The illegal and immoral high-handed and arbitrary practices of the United States will surely be settled by the peace-loving countries' aspirations for independence and peace, and the sacred cause of realizing international justice will be accomplished without fail.

**Mr. Belousov** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I asked for the floor in right of reply in connection with the statements by certain States with regard to the situation around Ukraine.

We refuse to tolerate yet another unforgivable, hypocritical attempt by Western countries to replace

the real cause of the Ukrainian crisis by shifting all blame on Russia. The Ukrainian crisis did not arise in February 2022. During the entire period after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the United States and its satellites cultivated in Ukraine anti-Russian and neo-Nazi sentiments; fomented hate of Russia and everything Russian; suppressed the Russian language, history and culture; and engaged in the military development of Ukraine's territory. In 2008, the door to NATO was opened for Ukraine, as essentially it was promised membership in NATO. All that created a direct threat to Russia's security.

In February 2014, with the support of the United States and the European Union, an unconstitutional armed coup d'état was carried out in Kyiv, as a result of which nationalist radicals took power in the country. In April 2014, the Kyiv regime sent its army to crack down on protests of the people of Donbas who were attempting to defend their rights and identity. That eventually led to a civil war, which was prevented from spreading throughout the entire country thanks only to the conclusion of the Minsk agreements, which for a time made it possible to resolve the conflict through political and diplomatic means. However, Kyiv, with the support of the West, sabotaged its implementation and prepared for vengeance, which was publicly recognized last year by former leaders of Ukraine, France and Germany. For seven years, the Ukrainian armed forces carried out artillery strikes against residences and civilian infrastructure in Donbas. At the same time, the Ukrainian authorities maintained a brutal blockade of the region. Russia, throughout those years, supported dialogue between Kyiv and Donbas and the implementation of the Minsk agreements by all parties, and it was actively engaged in the work of the contact group and the Normandy format.

At the same time, NATO countries were actively militarizing Ukraine and conducting more and more large-scale and joint exercises on its territory. In February 2022, at the Munich Security Conference, Mr. Zelenskyy voiced claims to nuclear weapons, which created real risks for Russia and international security. The same month the Ukrainian armed forces provoked an escalation in Donbas and stepped up their shelling. More than 100,000 residents of the region were forced to flee to Russia. We therefore were left with no other choice but to recognize the independence of the Donetsk People's Republic and the Luhansk People's Republic and, on 24 February 2022, to begin a special

military operation to protect Donbas, demilitarize and denazify Ukraine and manage threats emanating from its territory.

We reject all baseless accusations by Western countries with regard to Russia's special military operation in Ukraine, which is being conducted in full compliance with the Charter of the United Nations and international law. The events taking place in Ukraine have a global geopolitical importance. The United States of America and its NATO allies are using Kyiv as an instrument to fight against Russia. They seek to maintain their dominance in global affairs and prevent the emergence of a truly multipolar world with centres of power that are independent of Washington and Brussels.

With regard to the unfounded assertions that Russia has violated the Budapest Memorandum, I would like to recall that the Memorandum is an element of a package of agreements, in the form of a political declaration, which places equal obligations on all parties. After signing those documents, Russia strictly has abided by them.

However, Western countries have long attempted to tear Ukraine away from Russia once and for all. They deliberately trampled on the sovereignty of this young, very diverse and therefore extremely fragile State. The United States and its allies unceremoniously interfered in the internal and foreign affairs of Kyiv and have constantly forced it towards a non-alternative, Western-oriented future. Despite the initially neutral status of Ukraine, they dragged it into a bloc confrontation with Russia, cynically playing on the Russophobic and nationalist sentiment of a small part of the population. The 1994 agreements were undermined by the destabilizing decision of Washington and its allies to promote the unchecked expansion of NATO and to militarily and politically assimilate the post-Soviet space, to the detriment of the fundamental and legitimate security interests of Russia. That flies in the face of the content of the Budapest package of documents, which contain provisions that are analogous to the principle of equal and indivisible security and reflect a commitment to collective efforts to build an architecture of European security.

**Ms. Basheer (Kuwait)** (*spoke in Arabic*): I want to respond to some issues that were addressed in meetings of the First Committee.

I note that the delegation of the State of Kuwait associates itself with the statements delivered,

respectively, on behalf of the Group of Arab States and the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and would like to make several remarks.

First and foremost, more than 6,500 civilian martyrs, including 2,300 children, 1,300 women and more than 200 elderly persons fell in 18 days. The number of victims killed continues to rise in the Gaza Strip even as we speak.

We would like to express our sincere condolences and sympathy to the brotherly Palestinian people and to the families of the martyrs who fell victim to the inhumane indiscriminate shelling by the Israeli occupation forces on the Gaza Strip. We strongly condemn the flagrant violations committed by the occupying forces, which, under the pretext of self-defence, are not complying with any international humanitarian laws. The result is the commission of grave and inhumane massacres that have claimed thousands of lives and injured more than 17,500 Palestinians.

We stress that the State of Kuwait categorically rejects the calls of the Israeli occupation to forcibly displace Palestinians from the Gaza Strip. We also reject the continued escalation, killing and indiscriminate destruction, as well as the resulting devastating suffering of the brotherly Palestinian population and deterioration of the humanitarian and medical situations in the Gaza Strip due to the actions of the Israeli occupation forces.

We call on the international community and the Security Council to intervene immediately and put an end to this brutal war, which does not distinguish between civilian and military targets. We also call for an immediate lifting of the blockade on the Gaza Strip and for ensuring the entry of all humanitarian and medical aid to the Strip. We demand that food and water be provided to the brotherly Palestinian people.

With regard to the debate within the First Committee, the current developments in the Middle East and the escalation of violence and conflicts require us to bolster international cooperation and multilateral efforts. We must create a zone free of nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East in order to prevent the region from falling into the abyss of a nuclear war its people do not need. We urge all the States of the region to comply with the provisions of the indefinite extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT)



during the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the Treaty.

Some may claim the failure of the initiatives on establishing a zone free of nuclear weapons in the Middle East. The State of Kuwait is committed to its steadfast and established position regarding the maintenance of international peace and security and the issues of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. We reaffirm our support for the NPT and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

Given our deep belief in, and strong insistence on, nuclear non-proliferation in the Middle East, the State of Kuwait presided over the second session of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction. The Conference's rules of procedure were adopted and an informal intersessional working group was established, in addition to the adoption of the final report. We commend the good efforts made by our brothers in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and the sisterly Lebanese Republic during their presidency of the latest sessions. We wish every success to the sisterly State of Libya, which will preside over the upcoming fourth session.

In conclusion, actions speak louder than words. That is why we are committed to our joint objective of global disarmament, which can be achieved only through the effective participation of all and through multilateral efforts to achieve peace and prevent the escalation of conflicts. That will be possible only if we can establish a zone free of nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East.

**Mr. Kasabri** (Palestine): I asked for the floor to put forward several urgent points.

Israel must stop its war against Gaza. It must stop its monstrous, indiscriminate bombing of defenceless and innocent Palestinian civilians and their houses, schools, hospitals, mosques and churches.

Just a few days ago, the Israeli war machine bombed one of the oldest churches in the world — the Greek Orthodox Church of Saint Porphyrius. I believe it is the third oldest church in the world and one of the most well-known churches in Palestine. In it, Palestinian Christians and Muslims were seeking refuge. They were praying for peace and justice. Alan, their prayer was silenced by the kind of rocket that killed

hundreds of innocents a few days earlier in the Al-Ahli Anglican hospital.

I want to repeat the number of people that have been killed. My colleague from Kuwait just mentioned those victims, but I feel that I need to present our condolences here for those innocent people killed by the Israeli war machine even if I cannot mention their name one by one.

Israel, the occupying Power, must lift its crippling siege on Gaza. It must allow humanitarian corridors to take place. There is no more water; there is no more electricity; there is no more food; there is no more medicine. Hospitals are announcing an urgent appeal that they cannot function anymore. The remaining hospitals, struggling to provide medical services for thousands, are now threatened to be bombarded if not evacuated. What kind of atrocities are we witnessing?

We cannot allow Israel, the occupying Power since its creation, to recommit another crime of Nakba against the Palestinians. Now, Israel is forcibly displacing the civilians in Gaza, ordering them to flee from the north to the south, which means from the no shelter to the no shelter. Then Israel targets them on their way to seek refuge. What we are witnessing now is another crime of ethnic cleansing and Israel's ongoing war against the existence of the Palestinian people. Hear it from me — history does not intend to write another Palestinian Nakba on our watch.

**Mr. Ahmed** (Egypt): My delegation is taking the floor in response to the most recent right of reply and previous interventions by the representative of Israel and also in response to some extremely unbalanced rights of reply exercised recently. A few days ago, a representative from the delegation of Israel, from this same seat, spoke about the impact of terrorism on the Middle East and mentioned that terrorism is evil. I reconfirm emphatically that terrorism is evil. But let me call upon Israel to also note that bombing hospitals is evil, bombing churches is evil, laying siege to civilians is evil, calling Palestinians human animals and children of the dark is evil, foreign occupation is very evil, nuclear weapons are evil, nuclear facilities unprotected for decades are evil; and genocides, violence and mass killings in the course of history have always been evil. And what is happening to Gaza now should not be perceived as less evil. Double standards are evil.

**Mr. Alqaisi** (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to respond to some imbalanced statements about

the situation in the Gaza Strip. I note that Israel violated and continues to violate international law undeterred. And neither does it comply with Security Council resolutions. It builds settlements in the Palestinian occupied territories, in clear violation of international law; confiscates Palestinian lands, without accountability; forces the inhabitants of Jerusalem to leave their homes; tramples the right of the peoples of the region to live in peace; kills 14 Palestinians every hour in this war; and deprives Palestinians of their right to water, food and medicine. That is the truth that everyone knows. Those actions must be condemned.

The position of the Group of Arab States with respect to the continued war against Gaza is clear — we condemn the Israeli aggression against the Gaza Strip; we demand an immediate end to the war, we warn against any attempts to displace Palestinians, which is a war crime; and finally, we demand the safe and sustainable entry of humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip.

*(spoke in English)*

In my national capacity, I would like to address the arguments regarding the right to self-defence.

The taking of innocent civilian lives cannot be justified as an act of self-defence. Targeting residences, educational institutions, mosques, churches and medical facilities is not the right to self-defence.

As of today, the toll stands at more than 6,000 Palestinians killed — more than 2,000 of them children. Tragically, many journalists and United Nations personnel have lost their lives, and more than 15,000 Palestinians have been injured. Furthermore, Israeli bombing in Gaza has displaced more than 1 million people. Consequently, the actions undertaken by Israel in Gaza cannot be deemed a legitimate exercise of self-defence.

This brutal and inhuman war against civilians must cease immediately. The international community must express a clear voice and take swift action against this war. We remind one and all that international law cannot be selective. Only a just peace can ensure security for all. The path to peace is through ending the occupation, acknowledging the Palestinians' right to self-determination and establishing an independent Palestinian State along the 4 June 1967 lines, with East Jerusalem as its capital, pursuant to United Nations resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative.

**Mr. Moharram** (Saudi Arabia) *(spoke in Arabic)*: The delegation of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia associates itself with the statement delivered by the representative of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan on behalf of the Group of Arab States, and would like to add several remarks.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia denounces the fact that the Israeli occupation has not stopped its continued attacks against civilians. My country calls on the international community to set aside double standards and selectivity in the implementation of international humanitarian law with regard to criminal Israeli practices. We hold the Israeli occupation forces fully responsible for the continued violation of all international norms and laws. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia calls for establishing an immediate ceasefire, allowing humanitarian aid to enter Gaza and stopping the forced displacement of the Palestinian people.

**Mr. Al Ashkar** (Syrian Arab Republic) *(spoke in Arabic)*: I take the floor to respond to the statement made by the representative of Israel, which included unfounded and totally refuted claims.

For three weeks now, the entity of the representative who lectures on the maintenance of security and peace and the protection of civilians has been escalating its criminal acts in the Palestinian occupied territories. More than 6,000 people have been killed, mostly women and children. That entity continues to push the region to unprecedented levels of tension and instability. That is not unfamiliar. The occupation entity has been carrying out the mass displacement of Palestinians by terrorizing the population with the threat of being brutally killed at the hands of criminal gangs, and history is replete with testimonies to that effect. There is no need to mention them now.

Everyone is aware of the deep organic relationship between that entity and the terrorist Al-Nusra Front since the beginning of the terrorist war against Syria. My delegation condemns the crimes committed by the Israeli occupation against our people in occupied Palestine. We warn Israel against the consequences of committing those crimes. We cannot remain idle while Israel tramples international law before the eyes of the world. The United Nations must shoulder its responsibilities to put an end to the barbaric acts of aggression against the Palestinian people. The region will never enjoy stability as long as Arab territories

are occupied and as long as the relevant resolutions of international legitimacy are not implemented.

With regard to the statement of the representative of Israel on the use of chemical weapons in Syria, my delegation has already confirmed that this is part of propaganda by a hateful and hostile entity that occupies Syrian territory. That entity therefore lacks credibility and does not deserve a reply.

**The Chair:** We have exhausted the time graciously extended to us by the interpreters for their services. I note that the representatives of Armenia, Iraq and Iran have asked for the floor for a first intervention and that the Russian Federation and Kuwait have asked for the floor for a second intervention. They will be heard as

the first speakers in exercise of the right of reply at our next meeting.

I would like to remind delegations that there will be no plenary meeting of the First Committee held tomorrow morning. The next plenary meeting will be held tomorrow afternoon in this conference room. We will first hear briefings by the President of the Conference on Disarmament, the Chair of the United Nations Disarmament Commission, the Chair of the Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters and the Director of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research. Thereafter, we will continue our thematic discussion under the cluster “Disarmament machinery”.

*The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.*