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First Committee

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Official Records

Chair: Mr. Paulauskas (Lithuania)

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

Agenda items 90 to 106 (continued)

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

The Chair: The Committee will now continue its thematic discussion under the cluster “Outer space”. There are 24 speakers remaining on the list for this cluster. As delegations are aware, based on the current programme of work, the Committee should conclude its consideration of the cluster today. Should we make good progress today, my intention is to proceed with the list of speakers under the cluster “Conventional weapons”. That list has been circulated by the Secretariat.

Mrs. Petit (France) (*spoke in French*): My delegation aligns itself with the statement made on behalf of the European Union (see A/C.1/78/PV.16), and I would like to add some comments in my national capacity.

Preserving a safe and stable space environment has always been France’s priority, with a view to ensuring that the benefits of space technologies and services are used for the prosperity and security of all, in both established and emerging spacefaring nations and in all countries whose development increasingly depends on space services. Today’s space environment is not the same as it was 35 years ago, when the prevention of an arms race in outer space was first put on the agenda of the Conference on Disarmament. The proliferation of space systems and their dual nature, the increasing

dependence of all societies on space services and the emergence of hostile or unfriendly behaviour in space make it necessary to analyse and address the issue of space security from a broader perspective. In that context, our constant and shared objective of preventing an arms race in outer space must now also include the urgent task of preventing any escalation or conflict in outer space. To meet those challenges, we should first bear in mind that international law applies to outer space, with two of its pillars being the Charter of the United Nations and the 1967 Outer Space Treaty. Respect for that body of international law is fundamental and France is of course very committed to it.

Secondly, we must work to complement it with concrete measures to strengthen space security. First of all, that requires greater transparency for space activities, and France is playing its full part by being very clear about its space doctrine and policy, including with regard to its capabilities. That is a transparency and confidence-building measure that an increasing number of States and international organizations are taking, and we welcome it. But above all, it requires in-depth work on the source of space threats, which are now largely hostile or irresponsible behaviours. The Open-ended Working Group on Reducing Space Threats through Norms, Rules and Principles of Responsible Behaviours, which concluded its work in September, has for the first time made it possible to make concrete and pragmatic progress on this front. It has been an unprecedented forum for open discussion among all States in an inclusive format that has enabled us to identify promising topics on which

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we can make progress in the short term. It has been a catalyst for initiatives that enhance space safety, such as resolution 77/41, which calls on all States to refrain from conducting testing of destructive direct-ascent anti-satellite missiles. It has allowed all States, even those with reservations about the process, to express their concerns freely. Lastly, it has identified many elements that will provide a basis for possible future legally binding instruments that the approach based on the norms of responsible behaviours does not replace but can now help to prepare.

We welcome the fact that those elements have been highlighted in the report of the Secretary-General (A/78/75) on the implementation of transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space, issued pursuant to resolution 77/251. The lack of consensus on the Group's final report, due to the fact that it was blocked by one State, does not detract from these successes. That is why France supports the draft resolution proposed by the United Kingdom to establish a second Open-ended Working Group, a natural follow-up called for by a majority of participants in the first Group.

France is committed to making progress on all work that can strengthen space security. We hope that the Group of Governmental Experts on Further Practical Measures for the Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space, which will begin its work next month, will be able to work towards that goal in a constructive spirit, building on the results of the Open-ended Working Group in a complementary manner. It is in that spirit that we will approach the work of the cluster "Outer space", so that we can continue the work done so far as well as possible and optimize the resources dedicated to it. In that regard, we regret the proposals that represent a particular additional burden on many Member States and do not allow them to benefit fully from efforts already under way or that are upcoming. The Committee can count on France to work constructively to advance discussions and achieve concrete results in the area of space security.

Mr. Fausto (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mexico has always maintained a firm and resolute position against weaponizing outer space or regarding it as a viable arena for confrontation. The use and exploration of outer space should be conducted in the interests of all States, regardless of their size, power or wealth. Access to it should be based on the principles of cooperation and mutual assistance, recognizing the growing relevance

of space as a tool for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. In accordance with the 1967 Outer Space Treaty, it is our firm belief that no weapons, especially weapons of mass destruction, should be deployed or used in outer space. Space technologies play a crucial role in the fight against climate change, disaster management, agriculture, education and health, among other things. It is our collective responsibility to ensure that space remains accessible and beneficial to all, especially developing countries or countries with smaller space capabilities. Any activity inconsistent with those principles should be a matter of concern to the Committee.

Like many other developing countries, we emphasize the importance of addressing outer space issues with a multilateral approach, stressing the need for inclusiveness and consideration of the concerns of all States, regardless of their space capabilities. In that regard, Mexico underscores the urgent need to establish a legally binding instrument to ensure that no actor, whether State or private entity, places weapons of any kind and in any circumstances in outer space. We must preserve outer space for exclusively peaceful purposes and keep in mind that it belongs not to one nation or group of nations but to humankind as a whole.

Just as we are in favour of a legally binding instrument, my country also recognizes the value of confidence-building measures and other agreements that complement that approach. The accelerated development of new technologies, some of which can be used maliciously, requires urgent attention from the United Nations.

I conclude by noting that this year we are once again witnessing the presentation of competing draft resolutions on the same subject. We encourage the authors to cooperate with a view to a unified proposal. We must avoid the creation of parallel processes and mechanisms, which only lead to the inefficient use of the resources of this Organization and worsen the polarization and fragmentation of our efforts.

Ms. Seongmee Yoon (Republic of Korea): As a spacefaring nation, the Republic of Korea is firmly committed to ensuring a safe, secure, and sustainable space environment for the benefit of all. In the light of the characteristics of outer space, as well as the dual-use nature of space technology and systems, it would be crucial to take multi-faceted efforts to address current and potential challenges pertaining to space security.

In that regard, the Republic of Korea supports constructive efforts made by the Member States and the international community. We sincerely welcome the consensus adoption of the report on transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space (A/78/42, annex) by the Disarmament Commission in April. We also look forward to the discussion of the Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) on Prevention of Arms Race in Outer Space (PAROS) beginning this November in Geneva.

An overwhelming number of 164 Member States supported resolution 75/36, which established the Open-Ended Working Group (OEWG) on Reducing Space Threats through Norms, Rules and Principles of Responsible Behaviours. The OEWG has proven itself to be a constructive platform in finding convergence of views on space threat reduction over the past two years. Unfortunately, however, the most recent session of the OEWG failed to produce an outcome, including a procedural report.

Nonetheless, the lack of consensus cannot and should not overshadow the value of the OEWG. As was expressed in a joint statement delivered during its closed meeting,

“the inclusive nature of this process, in terms of both participation of stakeholders and the range of issues and measures that could be discussed, makes it an invaluable platform that ensures that the voices of Member States and relevant stakeholders are heard on an issue that affects us all.”

The continuation of this work should be an urgent priority to safeguard space security. We therefore appreciate draft resolution A/C.1/78/L.15/Rev.1 submitted by the United Kingdom. The Republic of Korea fully supports the draft resolution and expresses its full commitment to the follow-up OEWG sessions scheduled in 2025 and 2026 by the draft resolution.

In addition, my delegation would like to express deep concern over creating another OEWG on PAROS even before starting discussions at the PAROS GGE. Adding another OEWG on the same topic will be an unnecessary duplication and distract the work of the PAROS GGE.

The Republic of Korea will continue its contributions by providing support to the United Nations Space Security Portal and the Space Security Lexicon launched by the United Nations Institute for

Disarmament Research. We believe that sharing national space strategies and other practical information through the portal can contribute to enhancing transparency, confidence and capacity-building in space security. My delegation also believes that the Lexicon can contribute to establishing the common understanding of key terminologies and concepts, thus encouraging more constructive discussions.

With more actors, access and dependency, space is becoming increasingly congested, contested and competitive every day. At the advent of this new space age, the Republic of Korea would like to highlight that the role of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space and the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs (UNOOSA) is becoming more important than ever. In that regard, we welcome the timely appointment of a new Director of UNOOSA, Ms. Holla-Maini, who has much experience in the space sector.

Taking this opportunity, we would like to reiterate our position that the recent launches by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, though they turned out to be unsuccessful, are a clear violation of Security Council resolutions and therefore cannot be considered peaceful use of outer space.

In conclusion, the Republic of Korea wishes to reaffirm its unwavering commitment to international efforts to ensure that space activities are conducted with a view to promoting global peace and security and ultimately lead to improving the lives of people all around the world.

Mr. Clutterbuck (New Zealand): Modern communities rely extensively on space-enabled capabilities, which provide a wide and growing range of critical capabilities, enable exciting research and help us find answers to many of our most confronting shared challenges. We also look to space as we respond to crises and emergencies, such as the responses to extreme weather events and other natural disasters around the world. That is why New Zealand advocates an outer space environment that is peaceful, sustainable, safe and stable, and in particular, efforts to reduce the risk of conflict in space.

New Zealand welcomes the developments in the international space security discussion over the past year. More than 30 countries have now committed not to test direct ascent anti-satellite missiles, in line with the call in resolution 77/41. That is an important step towards reducing the threat of destructive activities

creating long-lived and potentially damaging orbital debris. We continue to call on all States to make that commitment.

We were also pleased to see the Disarmament Commission achieve consensus on recommending the implementation of transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space.

New Zealand particularly welcomes the progress that has been made in advancing our shared understanding of space threats and on approaches to reduce them by the Open-Ended Working Group (OEWG) on Reducing Space Threats through Norms, Rules and Principles of Responsible Behaviours. Although the OEWG was not able to deliver a consensus report, it has been encouraging to see the emergence of key areas of convergence. We see that the OEWG has successfully advanced discussions on responsible behaviours in an inclusive and open format, which has helped to ensure the widest engagement on those issues.

Like many participants, New Zealand sees the value in continuing the conversation on reducing space threats through promoting responsible behaviours in space. We are pleased to cosponsor draft resolution A/C.1/78/L.15/Rev.1, entitled “Reducing space threats through norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviours”, which calls for the establishment of a further two-year OEWG in 2025.

The proposed mandate of the Group aims to focus discussions on areas where consensus has been emerging to identify and agree pragmatic and timely areas for progress. The two-year time frame will help to maintain current momentum in the space security conversation and support the international community to address the risk of conflict in space. On that basis, we call upon all States to support draft resolution A/C.1/78/L.15/Rev.1, on reducing space threats through norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviours. We look forward to the opportunity to continue that important conversation over the next two years.

In that context, we also express our concerns with the approach contained in draft resolution A/C.1/78/L.55, entitled “Further practical measures for the prevention of an arms race in outer space”, proposed by Russia. The draft resolution calls for the establishment of a separate four-year working group focused on a separate treaty. We view that initiative as unhelpfully long-running, duplicative and needlessly narrowing of the conversation that will be taken forward

during the responsible behaviours OEWG. The need to address the risk of conflict in space is real and urgent, and we cannot support an approach that constrains the international discussion and prolongs any outcome.

We also share the concerns of other delegations that the establishment of competing processes will create capacity challenges for smaller States and those States with emerging space capabilities to effectively engage in those important conversations.

In conclusion, let me reiterate that New Zealand supports measures to prevent an arms race in outer space and places a high priority on that issue. A peaceful, sustainable, safe and secure outer space environment is essential to our collective interests.

Mr. Ogasawara (Japan): The importance of outer space is significantly increasing, and its use touches on every aspect of our lives and societies. For instance, there is the use of outer space for global navigation systems, which support both civilian and military activities. As space actors and activities increase and evolve, it is in our common interest, for current and future generations, to maintain and ensure the security, stability and sustainability of outer space activities. Advancing rule-making on space security is therefore an urgent challenge for all. In that context, Japan reiterates its strong commitment to ensuring the security, stability and sustainability of outer space activities and supports the objective of preventing an arms race in outer space as its unwavering basic position. As stated in my country’s space security initiative, launched in June, in which the Government of Japan redefined its space policy in terms of security, Japan will actively contribute to discussions in this area and promote the development of international norms and rules for the use of outer space, including from a security perspective.

Japan highly appreciates the inclusive and comprehensive discussions in the Open-ended Working Group (OEWG) on Reducing Space Threats through Norms, Rules and Principles of Responsible Behaviours, under the able leadership of its Chair, Mr. Hellmut Lagos of Chile. Although it is regrettable that no consensus was reached on the Group’s substantive report or even its procedural one, the abundance of working papers and interactive dialogues among the Member States, coupled with the participation of non-governmental stakeholders, was evidence of the keen interest in our

common endeavour of reducing space threats through norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviour.

In that connection, we welcome the submission of the Chairperson's summary (A/AC.294/2023/WP.22) to the OEWG, which provides a useful basis for advancing our future discussions on the topic. In the OEWG's discussions many Member States, including Japan, have emphasized the need to take into account the dual-use nature of space systems in addressing space threats, and we have also seen concrete ideas put forward on potential norms for responsible behaviours, as indicated in the Chairperson's summary. Wide cross-regional support for the work of the OEWG and its continuation was evident in the deliberations at the Group's final session. Japan considers the responsible-behaviour approach to be a practical way forward in advancing the prevention of an arms race in outer space in a comprehensive manner, and strongly supports continuing discussions on reducing space threats through norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviours by re-establishing an OEWG in 2025, as proposed in the draft resolution to be submitted by the United Kingdom as A/C.1/78/L.15/Rev.1. Japan is happy to co-sponsor the draft resolution. Japan also welcomes the recommendations to promote the practical implementation of transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities with the goal of preventing an arms race in outer space, adopted by the United Nations Disarmament Commission in April.

With a view to making progress in our common endeavour, we also underline the importance of synergies among multilateral disarmament platforms such as the Conference on Disarmament and other bodies of the United Nations. Japan looks forward to participating in the meetings of the Group of Governmental Experts on Further Practical Measures for the Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space, starting in November.

Mr. Robinson (Ireland): Ireland aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union (EU) (see A/C.1/78/PV.16), and I would like to add the following remarks in my national capacity.

As we continue to witness increasing threats to international peace and security, we are also experiencing rapid growth in human space activity. Ireland is committed to the prevention of an arms race in outer space, the preservation of a safe, secure and sustainable space environment and the peaceful use of outer space on an equitable basis for all. Satellites

and other space-based and related assets, systems and services are a feature of daily life and are essential to the proper functioning of critical civilian infrastructure, including food supplies, water, electricity, sanitation, waste management, telecommunications and health care, as well as the overall functioning of our economies. Those systems therefore also stand to contribute to tackling key challenges of our time, such as mitigating climate change and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

At the same time, we have witnessed a surge in outer space security challenges that threaten the operation of these critical systems and may have a significant impact on civilians. Whether spacefaring or not, all States therefore have an integral role to play in improving the space security environment and ensuring that space is used exclusively for peaceful purposes for the benefit of all humankind. Space is a global common good and therefore requires global rules. It is crucial that we develop new norms and rules governing human activity in space that are in accordance with international space law, as laid out in the Charter of the United Nations, existing international law — including international humanitarian law — and the principal United Nations treaties on outer space, among other things.

Threats to space security do not only originate in space but also include Earth-based weapons and capabilities, threats to ground-based infrastructure and datalinks, and cyberattacks. It is imperative that we close some persistent and notable gaps, such as the testing and use of destructive methods against satellites that are not prohibited by any treaty. Ireland remains deeply concerned about the development and proliferation of such anti-satellite weapons, whether deployed from orbit or launched from Earth. Such destructive activities are a matter of humanitarian concern. Further particular risks associated with such weapons include the generation of long-lived debris. The development and testing of such systems are dangerous and highly destabilizing and could lead to deteriorating confidence between space actors.

Earlier this year, in the context of the Open-ended Working Group (OEWG) on Reducing Space Threats through Norms, Rules and Principles of Responsible Behaviours, Ireland, together with its fellow EU member States, committed to refraining from conducting destructive direct-ascent anti-satellite missile tests. That commitment speaks to the priority that we attach to transparency and confidence-building

measures. Ireland supports a comprehensive approach within the multilateral system resulting in legally binding rules on those weapon systems. Despite that, and without excluding the development of legally binding agreements, Ireland believes that voluntary measures constitute a pragmatic path forward at this point in time, beginning with norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviours, through an inclusive, multi-stakeholder process.

Ireland fully supported the work of the Open-ended Working Group, which concluded this summer. Its central message and goal of the preservation of outer space for exclusively peaceful purposes is vital, and we regret that it was prevented from adopting a consensus substantive report. The discussions over the two years were nevertheless a valuable and important exercise, and we were encouraged by the broad cross-regional engagement demonstrated throughout the process. We remain committed to such a multilateral approach and welcome the proposal of the United Kingdom to establish a successor OEWG that would take forward the important progress made.

In conclusion, Ireland emphasizes that if we are to make real and substantial progress, an open, inclusive multi-stakeholder approach is essential. The participation of diverse stakeholders, including international organizations, commercial actors, civil society, the International Committee of the Red Cross and academia, is crucial. Those stakeholders can contribute much-needed technical knowledge and experience, facilitating holistic and more beneficial discussions. Only through such collective and collaborative action can we truly make space more safe, secure and sustainable for us all.

Mr. Del Rosario Vela (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): Spain fully aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union (see A/C.1/78/PV.16), and I would like to add the following remarks in my national capacity.

Space is a common good, and all of humankind is its custodian. A growing number of actors of various kinds are carrying out more and more activities in outer space, whether civilian, commercial or military in nature, with an ever-increasing impact on activities on Earth, whether civilian, commercial or military in nature. Spain is actively involved in the promotion of a safe and sustainable space environment and is firmly committed to the prevention of an arms race in outer space, which

is essential to ensuring the peaceful use of space and strengthening international security and stability. International law and international humanitarian law are applicable to outer space. The Charter of the United Nations, the major space treaties and other measures such as the guidelines of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space constitute the cornerstones of global governance in outer space.

Events in recent years have shown that we cannot put off reflecting on the security aspects of outer space, which has been witnessing an increase in threats, real or perceived, that are multiplying and endangering the long-term sustainability of the space environment. Furthermore, the emergence of new actors and the development of new technologies, most of them dual-use, has coincided with a situation of serious international tension. All of those factors are compelling us to accelerate and intensify our efforts to achieve a peaceful, safe and stable space environment. Actions such as anti-satellite missile testing are incompatible with that objective and should be condemned in the strongest terms. For that reason, Spain welcomes the commitment made by a growing number of States to refraining from conducting destructive direct-ascent anti-satellite missile tests.

From the very beginning, my delegation has supported the work of the Open-ended Working Group on Reducing Space Threats through Norms, Rules and Principles of Responsible Behaviours, created by resolution 76/231, which was introduced by the United Kingdom. In its four sessions, the Open-ended Working Group has conducted a process reflecting on security threats in, to and from outer space with a view to responding to them with transparency and confidence-building measures. It has also provided an opportunity to examine the existing legal framework to reflect on its shortcomings and possibilities for development and to reaffirm the applicability of international law to space. Above all, it has created a framework of dialogue and trust in which States have been able to share their concerns and priorities related to a field that is undergoing such rapid change as outer space is.

In short, the Open-ended Working Group process has come to an end, having provided us with rich technical and substantive exchanges but without reaching a consensus on a final report. Despite that, it is worth highlighting the great interest shown by most participating States in the process, which reflects the

prevailing need to develop some type of regulation on the matter to prevent the existing gap between technological development and current regulations from widening.

In that connection, the Spanish delegation welcomes the draft resolution submitted by the United Kingdom entitled “Reducing space threats through norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviours”, which we consider a step in the right direction. We hope that it can move forward with the support of a large majority of States. In these times of grave tension, the maintenance of international peace and security is more than ever in need of forums and measures that contribute to the promotion of transparency and trust.

Mr. Masmejean (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): I will deliver a shortened version of our statement, and the full version will be made available.

A direct military confrontation in outer space would have considerable consequences for access to essential services for our civilian populations. That is why we must ensure that space does not become a theatre of war. To achieve that objective, the following measures are of particular importance to us.

First, the placement of weapons in outer space increases the risk of transforming that environment into an area of conflict. In addition, the adoption of military doctrines considering space as an arena for combat also raises concerns and could contribute to increased tensions. Addressing those issues should be a priority.

Secondly, the testing and possible employment of anti-satellite weapons is of particular concern, owing to the massive amount of space debris that such weapon systems create. That is why we welcome the announcements of a number of States that they will refrain from carrying out destructive direct-ascent anti-satellite missile tests, a commitment that Switzerland made last year. We call on all States to join us in that commitment.

Thirdly, strict compliance with existing obligations under international law is vital to meeting the challenges we face in space security. In that context, I would like to reaffirm our conviction that international humanitarian law applies to all armed conflicts, whether they take place on land, at sea, in the air or in space. However, that statement in no way legitimizes the use of force in space. Furthermore, the risk of collateral damage to civilians and civilian objects on Earth, as well as

the risk of creating debris for civilian space assets, raises serious questions about how to conduct armed conflict in space in compliance with international humanitarian law.

Finally, the Open-ended Working Group on Reducing Space Threats through Norms, Rules and Principles of Responsible Behaviours, which recently concluded in Geneva, gave us the opportunity to hold inclusive and productive discussions on space security. It is the first time that a series of issues relating to space security have been examined in such a framework and in such detail. In many ways, the Group broke new ground. We regret that it was not able to agree on a final document, considering that many delegations largely shared the same views on many issues. Nonetheless, the deliberations showed that they could serve as the starting point for more in-depth and renewed work. In that context, we welcome the proposal to create a new working group on reducing space threats with a more focused mandate. We welcome the four priority areas identified for further work, while noting that the list should not be considered exhaustive or prevent delegations from raising issues of concern to them.

Before concluding, let me emphasize that both the capabilities approach and the behavioural approach are important in preventing an arms race in space. Taken individually, neither is sufficient, but together they are complementary. In that context, we believe it will be useful to make progress in the two areas. At the same time, we must highlight our concern that we could face parallel processes in those areas, which would raise questions of coherence, efficiency and capacity. We hope that such a situation can be avoided.

Mr. Eshragh Jahromi (Islamic Republic of Iran): Let me start by saying that the Islamic Republic of Iran stands in unwavering solidarity with the resilient nation of Palestine during these trying times, and vehemently denounces the recent barbaric atrocities and heinous crimes committed by the Zionist regime of Israel. Our hearts go out to the people of Palestine, and we offer our heartfelt condolences in the face of those tragic events.

My delegation associates itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/78/PV.16).

We emphasize our steadfast commitment to the idea that outer space is a shared heritage of humankind and should be utilized solely for peaceful purposes,

benefiting all nations regardless of their economic or technological advances. Our foremost concern remains the negative ramifications associated with the development and deployment of anti-ballistic-missile defence systems and the looming threat of the weaponization of outer space. Those factors have significantly contributed to a deteriorating international security climate. The withdrawal from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty has introduced new challenges to global peace, security and stability, fostering the potential for an arms race in outer space. We are deeply troubled by the security risks posed by the deployment of strategic missile defence systems, which could trigger arms races, the advancement of missile technology and an escalation in nuclear weaponry. We reiterate the need for a universal, comprehensive and non-discriminatory multilateral approach to address missile-related issues within the United Nations that prioritizes the security concerns of all States while safeguarding their right to use space technologies for peaceful purposes.

We firmly reject the declaration made by a representative of the United States, in 2018, that space is a war-fighting domain or the next battlefield. Consequently, we stress the urgent necessity for the Conference on Disarmament to initiate substantive work, particularly on preventing an arms race in outer space. We acknowledge the 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, jointly presented by the Russian Federation and China. We also acknowledge the progress made by the Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) established pursuant to resolution 72/250. We express our deep disappointment that consensus on the draft final report was obstructed by the United States.

On another note, it was not surprising that the open-ended working group on reducing space threats through norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviours failed to produce any substantive or even procedural reports, given its inherent flaws. We have consistently cautioned against these shortcomings and believe that failing to heed those lessons may lead to similar outcomes in future. Fortunately, the establishment of the new GGE on the prevention of an arms race in outer space (PAROS) offers a potential for tangible results. Success hinges on avoiding the entrenchment of politicized positions among its members. We also acknowledge the consensus report (A/CN.10/2023/WG.II/CRP.2/Rev.1) of the corresponding Disarmament Commission

working group, which contains recommendations to promote transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities. There is no reason why similar success cannot be achieved if the views and concerns of all are taken on board.

It is worth noting that PAROS, as one of the four primary agendas of the Conference on Disarmament, has awaited the establishment of a special negotiating committee for over two decades. We call upon the United States to withdraw its opposition to that essential goal.

Finally, the Hague Code of Conduct Against Ballistic Missile Proliferation is a restrictive export control regime that unjustly imposes limitations on numerous goods, equipment, technologies and expertise with peaceful applications. We strongly advocate against monopolizing outer space or attempting to curtail the peaceful use of space-related science, expertise, technology and services for developing countries.

My full statement will be posted on the General Assembly portal.

Mr. Bencini (Italy): Italy aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union (see A/C.1/78/PV.16), and I would like to add some remarks in my national capacity.

Italy is historically engaged in actively improving space security and is strongly committed to the prevention of an arms race in outer space. That is also essential to safeguard the long-term use of the space environment for peaceful purposes on an equitable and mutually acceptable basis. The space domain is becoming more complex. Depending on the area of outer space in which activities take place, security has become closely interconnected with crucial economic and social functions on Earth, making it increasingly critical to ensure that future space exploration and exploitation activities be conducted in a peaceful and beneficial manner for all. Improving space security is therefore necessary — not only for spacefaring nations, but for every country, including developing ones — given the contemporary world's reliance on space systems and services.

We believe there is an urgent need to improve space security in this increasingly congested, contested and competitive outer space environment. We supported and took part with great interest in the meetings of the open-ended working group (OEWG) on reducing space threats through norms, rules and principles of

responsible behaviours. We appreciated the OEWG's inclusive character and the involvement of private actors that enriched the debate and helped bring some much-needed technical clarity to our deliberations. Although the OEWG did not reach consensus on a report, we believe that the work conducted over two years has revealed significant cross-regional convergence in support of the behavioural approach, as testified by the two joint statements delivered during its fourth and final session.

It is important to underline that this approach falls within the broader issue of the prevention of an arms race in outer space (PAROS). As such, it is not an alternative approach, nor does it prevent or otherwise forestall the negotiation of legally binding agreements. On the contrary, an early understanding on norms, rules and principles, while answering the urgent need to address the current complex space environment — now, in many aspects, unregulated — can provide the best and most solid basis to further develop international law in that field. For those reasons, we strongly support the renewal of this OEWG mandate, and we urge States to support that initiative, with the understanding that success will depend on good faith participation and engagement.

One of the issues discussed during the OEWG was that of destructive direct-ascent, anti-satellite missile tests. Those tests created debris that seriously endanger space activities and could have long lasting, increasingly negative consequences. Like all European Union member States, Italy has committed not to conduct such tests and is pleased to see growing international engagement to that effect. That is also a concrete result of the debates we had within the OEWG.

We are concerned about the possibility that this Committee will approve the mandates of two separate OEWGs. We prioritize the mandate of the OEWG on norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviours, as we believe it covers all the issues that we need to discuss urgently within the broader PAROS ecosystem. It would be unfortunate and counterproductive if a parallel process were established. Apart from the obvious effect of duplication, that would use up already limited financial resources, put enormous strain on an already congested disarmament calendar and make it virtually impossible for small delegations to follow both exercises with a sufficient level of attention.

Ms. Milligan (Canada): The rapid proliferation of space activities presents a significant opportunity for humankind. However, the viability of all space operations is increasingly vulnerable to a range of threats, a challenge that is further compounded by the absence of a more developed regime of international norms to govern space activities.

There is broad consensus on the need to improve space security, avoid the spread of armed conflict into outer space and prevent an arms race in outer space. But there remain divisions over the best method by which to achieve that. Some States maintain that a legally binding instrument is the only viable mechanism, while many others are supportive of a comprehensive approach that includes norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviour.

Canada is concerned that this ongoing division is false and serves only to perpetuate the deadlock in space disarmament deliberations. Legally binding instruments and norms, rules and principles are not contradictory, and broadly adopted norms of responsible behaviour can become legally binding international law in future. But the treaty process is long. As such, we must continue to advance practical steps that promote trust, transparency and confidence among States in order to reduce misunderstandings and miscalculations.

Canada was disappointed that the open-ended working group (OEWG) on reducing space threats through norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviours concluded without a substantive consensus report. The interactive discussions throughout the sessions of the OEWG made it clear that there is significant support among Member States for the elaboration of norms of responsible behaviour and the complementary role they can play alongside legally binding commitments in promoting space security. Canada therefore has concerns regarding the proposal for a second Open-ended Working Group with a single focus on legally binding measures for the prevention of an arms race in outer space. That also sets up a parallel process with the United Kingdom-led proposal, creating a burden on time and resources, particularly for countries with smaller delegations. Canada is pleased to continue its co-sponsorship of the United Kingdom draft resolution and urges States to lend their support to initiatives that demonstrate a spirit of openness, inclusivity and willingness to consider a broad range of mechanisms by which to achieve the goal of preventing an arms race in outer space in all its aspects.

(spoke in French)

Throughout the Open-ended Working Group meetings, we heard clear support for the openness and inclusivity of the process, and we welcomed the meaningful participation of civil society. Threats to space security can be addressed only by leveraging the expertise of the entire space community. Such broad engagement not only enriches deliberations, but it also ensures long-term success, given the role of civil society in promoting and implementing outcomes.

Similarly, an often-overlooked dimension of inclusion is gender. Canada will continue to champion the full, meaningful and equal participation of women in all aspects of disarmament, and space security is no exception. Moreover, it is important to assess the different impacts that insecurity in space has on communities here on Earth. Resilience to harm is uneven across societies, and those impacts can be felt disproportionately, depending on people's gender, race, sexuality, geography and socioeconomic status. As we continue our work in upcoming disarmament forums, Canada would like to highlight the benefit of applying diverse and gender-informed perspectives and recommendations.

A safe, secure and sustainable space environment is in the interests of all humankind and will ensure continued access to the important benefits that we derive from space. Canada looks forward to ongoing engagement with all its partners to achieve those common goals.

Mr. Mahmud (Nigeria): Nigeria aligns itself with the statements made by the representatives of Nigeria, on behalf of the Group of African States, and Indonesia, on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/78/PV.16), and would like to add the following remarks in its national capacity.

Given the challenges of the outer space and contemporary global security environment, my delegation underscores the importance of ensuring continued international commitment to the prevention of an arms race in outer space, thereby enhancing global security and the maintenance of international peace. Preventing an arms race in outer space has taken on greater urgency due to the vulnerability of the outer space environment and the inadequacy of existing legal instruments as deterrents to the further militarization of outer space. That is why Nigeria recognizes the need for a comprehensive, legally binding treaty on

the placement of weapons in outer space, as well as on armed attacks on outer space objects. My delegation also stresses the importance of an international legal framework that can enable the equitable exploration of outer space. Such a framework should be based on the principle of non-appropriation and the peaceful use of outer space, in conformity with the five United Nations treaties governing space activities, in particular the 1967 Outer Space Treaty.

For Nigeria, a legally binding instrument on the prevention of an arms race in outer space is a necessary condition for the promotion of international cooperation in the exploration and use of outer space for peaceful purposes and the preservation of international peace and security. It is therefore essential that among other things, any such treaty should ensure compliance with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations in outer space, the use of the moon and other celestial bodies exclusively for peaceful purposes, freedom of access to outer space without discrimination and on a basis of equality, the pacific settlement of disputes, the right to develop technology for peaceful purposes, international cooperation and assistance in facilitating peaceful uses of outer space, including provisions for training and capacity-building, and the objective of general and complete disarmament.

My delegation would like to reiterate its support for the prohibition of the placement of any weapons in outer space for offensive or defensive purposes; any aim, attack or use of force against satellites or other outer space objects, including through the use of missiles or other kinetic methods, such as manoeuvres, satellite or robot; any use of outer space objects as weapons for conducting armed attacks on or interference with outer space or tertiary targets; any international harmful interference that could interrupt or affect the normal functioning of satellites or outer space objects under the jurisdiction of another State or group of States; and the development, testing or stockpiling of weapons that are designed for the sole purpose of conducting armed attacks on satellites or other outer space objects, including anti-satellite weapons, or for use as outer space weapons.

We believe that all States, especially those with major space capabilities, have a special responsibility to contribute actively to the goal of the peaceful use of outer space, as well as the prevention of an arms race in outer space. We therefore call on all States to refrain from any action contrary to the peaceful use of outer

space and to adhere to the relevant existing treaties, in the interests of maintaining international peace and security and promoting international cooperation.

Finally, we reiterate the urgent need for the commencement of substantive negotiations within the Conference on Disarmament on a legally binding and multilaterally verifiable instrument on the prevention of an arms race in outer space in all its aspects.

Mr. Turner (United States of America): The United States is committed to strengthening efforts to ensure that outer space remains a safe, stable, secure and sustainable domain. Since last year, there have been a number of positive developments in our work that when taken together show that the international community can overcome its long-standing deadlock on outer space security issues.

Starting with their overwhelming support in the General Assembly for resolution 77/41, against conducting destructive, direct-ascent anti-satellite missile testing, Member States have signalled strong support in this body for new initiatives to address pressing threats to outer space environment and security. I want to thank the 36 countries that have so far joined the United States in making these national commitments, and we encourage other countries to do the same. That is the best way to ensure that this proposal will become an internationally recognized norm of behaviour and help us address this pressing threat. We also reaffirm that the equal, full and effective participation of women and marginalized groups in discussions on these threats is one of the essential factors in the promotion and attainment of sustainable peace and security.

Secondly, we were delighted that States reached consensus on outer space transparency and confidence-building measures at the most recent meeting of the Disarmament Commission. Despite all the challenges in the United Nations disarmament machinery, that success demonstrates that there are areas where we can achieve progress when the conditions and issues are right and reinforces the value of these multilateral discussions.

Finally, the recently concluded Open-ended Working Group on Reducing Space Threats through Norms, Rules and Principles of Responsible Behaviours proved to be a fresh, innovative forum for discussing space security issues that was welcomed by an overwhelming number of Member States.

While one country's objections and obstructionism prevented the group from achieving consensus on a final report, it was clear that a vast majority of States found these inclusive, collaborative and comprehensive discussions beneficial. We were also glad to see that the Chair's summary reflects that sentiment.

The United States believes that we must continue to build on that positive progress. In order to do that, States should focus on approaches that are comprehensive and follow the Secretary-General's recommendation in his 2022 report on "Further practical measures for the prevention of an arms race in outer space" (A/77/80), which calls for the pursuit of voluntary commitments on norms of responsible behaviour, transparency and confidence-building measures and concepts and proposals for new legally binding instruments. That is why the United States supports draft resolution A/C.1/78/L.15/Rev.1, which would create a new open-ended working group to carry forward the recently concluded process. That approach has garnered widespread support from Member States across all global regions, precisely because of its inclusivity on all issues. As clearly noted in the draft, that includes norms that contribute to legally binding instruments.

Unfortunately, this body is also being asked to support a new, divisive and duplicative open-ended working group that is narrowly focused and cannot achieve consensus. Draft resolution A/C.1/78/L.55, on "Further practical measures for the prevention of an arms race in outer space", with its paragraph proposing a parallel process, will not provide the international community with a path towards tangible results. It focuses on a one-track approach to addressing the prevention of an arms race in outer space and leaves out the important issues of transparency and confidence-building measures, norms, rules and principles, which can develop and build confidence and help build consensus on concepts that could be included in future legally binding instruments. We urge other Member States to vote against the draft resolution, or at a minimum against its operative paragraph 8, which calls for a new open-ended working group. The United States also does not support draft resolution A/C.1/78/L.53, on "No first placement of weapons in outer space". Among its many flaws, the draft resolution's inadequate crafting of what constitutes a weapon in outer space risks unduly or unfairly constraining promising dual-use technologies that could help sustain the outer-space environment.

To be clear, it is the United Kingdom's draft resolution on "Reducing space threats through norms, rules and principles of response behaviours" that is flexible, comprehensive, inclusive and reflective of significant investments of Member States' time and feedback. It is the only draft resolution that can take forward the well-regarded foundational work of the Open-ended Working Group that just concluded. I encourage all colleagues to support it as a proven path forward on these important space-security matters. If the past year of multilateral engagement on these issues has shown us anything, it is that States can have a robust discussion on norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviours that can reduce threats to the space domain and meaningfully promote the safety, stability, sustainability and security of outer space. There is no turning back. We look forward to continuing this essential work with all delegations.

Ms. Papathanasiou (Greece): Greece fully aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of the European Union (see A/C.1/78/PV.16) and would like to add the following remarks in its national capacity.

My country strongly believes that the five United Nations treaties on outer space, in particular the Outer Space Treaty, as well as the relevant sets of principles of the General Assembly, constitute the cornerstones of international space law, and we attach great importance to their implementation. Greece supports the principle that we should do everything possible to ensure that the peaceful use of outer space prevails over any use of force in space. In that context, we consider the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space and its two subcommittees to be unique platforms for inclusive dialogue on space law and policy issues and on international cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space, including the development of international space law, international norms, guidelines and best practices, and we are strongly committed to that task. It is not by chance that the Committee's important role in global space governance was recognized by the Secretary-General in *Our Common Agenda* (A/75/982) and is further emphasized by its growing membership.

In that respect, we recognize the need for the international community to come together and discuss ways and means to reinforce space governance in the interests of maintaining a sustainable outer space for the benefit of present and future generations. We strongly believe that peace in outer space cannot be achieved if we cannot prevent an arms race in space.

In that connection, Greece welcomed the General Assembly's adoption of resolution 76/231, on "Reducing space threats through norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviours", which calls for a common understanding on how best to act to reduce threats to space systems in order to maintain outer space as a peaceful, safe, stable and sustainable environment, free from an arms race or conflict and for the benefit of all. In that context, my country supports this year's draft resolution A/C.1/78/L.15, presented by the United Kingdom.

We echo all who believe that an approach based on responsible behaviours offers a more realistic framework for improving space security today, given the dual-use nature of many space systems, without excluding the possibility of new legally binding instruments in the future. That approach could enhance the existing normative framework for the peaceful exploration and use of outer space for the benefit of all nations. In addition, we deem that any future legally binding text in the field of space security should aim to cover all relevant threats in an effective and verifiable manner. Greece fully supports the work of the Open-ended Working Group on Reducing Space Threats Through Norms, Rules and Principles of Responsible Behaviours, which operated as an inclusive, transparent, open and comprehensive platform for dialogue. My country adheres to the position that publishing and sharing information about space doctrines, policies and strategies is a responsible behaviour and would help create confidence between different actors.

In conclusion, let me stress that Greece will continue to engage actively in the dialogue on the prevention of an arms race in outer space, as it does for the promotion and deepening of international cooperation in the space domain and the conduct of space activities in accordance with international law.

Mr. Shen Jian (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): Today outer space is facing increasingly severe security challenges. It is imperative for the international community to work together to prevent the weaponization of outer space and an arms race there, and to build a community with a shared future for humankind in outer space. The Chinese delegation presented China's general positions in that regard during the general debate and would like to take this opportunity to elaborate further.

First, we should adhere to the international consensus on the peaceful uses of outer space. As a global commons, outer space is linked to the welfare of all humankind. Regrettably, certain countries are obsessed with great-Power competition and a cold-war mentality and have continued to pursue dominance in outer space by declaring it an arena for fighting wars, accelerating the build-up of their space military capabilities and even planning to deploy missile-defence weapons in outer space. Such doctrines, policies and measures pose serious threats to the security of outer space, undermine global strategic stability and aggravate the risk of an arms race in outer space. Meanwhile, certain countries have overstretched the national security concept, arbitrarily suppressed other States' scientific research activities and technology development in outer space and seriously impeded the peaceful uses of outer space and international cooperation. China is of the view that all countries should adhere to the vision of common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security, commit to ensuring the peaceful nature of the use of outer space and fully guarantee the right of States to its peaceful exploration and use.

Secondly, we should advance the negotiation of a legally binding instrument on the prevention of an arms race in outer space. The first special session on disarmament of the United Nations called explicitly for achieving that goal through negotiations. Over four decades, the General Assembly has adopted resolutions on the subject on a yearly basis by an overwhelming majority, requesting the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva to negotiate a new international legally binding instrument on the prevention of an arms race in outer space. It is worrisome that one particular country is unwilling to accept any substantial constraints on its military capabilities in outer space and has rejected the negotiation of such an instrument, leading to a stalemate in the relevant process. China and Russia have jointly submitted to the Conference on Disarmament a 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, which has received broad support and recognition from the international community. China welcomes constructive comments and suggestions from all States on specific issues concerning the draft treaty.

Thirdly, we should coordinate the global governance of outer space security. The Conference on Disarmament and the United Nations Disarmament Commission have conducted in-depth discussions

on the prevention of an arms race in outer space. The subsidiary body established by the Conference on Disarmament agreed last year on a report on the prevention of an arms race in outer space. This year the Commission reached a consensus on recommendations to promote transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities, and China welcomes those developments. In recent years, however, due to differences regarding the concept of governance of outer space, the previous Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) on Further Practical Measures for the Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space and Open-ended Working Group on Reducing Space Threats through Norms, Rules and Principles of Responsible Behaviours both failed to produce an outcome. Between 2018 and 2019, the GGE conducted in-depth and substantive discussions on key issues pertaining to a relevant international legally binding instrument. China looks forward to further recommendations by the new GGE, related to substantial elements and relevant issues of a legally binding instrument on the prevention of an arms race in outer space, based on previous work.

We note that many countries remain deeply concerned about the dichotomy of responsible and irresponsible behaviours, with confusion over the concept of outer space security and safeguarding the peaceful use of the outer space, without focusing on the negotiation of a legally binding instrument on the prevention of an arms race in outer space. China hopes that certain countries will give due attention to those concerns and avoid the hasty re-establishment of the Open-ended Working Group on Reducing Space Threats through Norms, Rules and Principles of Responsible Behaviours, which would result in the same failure.

China has also noted that certain countries have expressed concerns about the parallel processes on the prevention of an arms race in outer space within the United Nations framework. We have always believed that the fundamental approach to maintaining security in outer space lies in the negotiation of an international legally binding instrument. International efforts should be focused on that approach and not directed elsewhere or supplanted.

Mr. Sæter (Norway): Space-based systems are essential to communications, positioning, navigation, timing, situational awareness and more. It continues to be essential to maintain outer space as a peaceful, safe, stable, secure and sustainable environment for the benefit of all. It is crucial that all States remain

committed to the peaceful exploration and use of outer space and refrain from conducting activities contrary to their obligations under international law. That includes activities that could threaten the ability of States to freely use and explore outer space now and in the future. The deliberations of the First Committee on preventing an arms race in outer space are an important contribution to that end. The prevention of an arms race in outer space is discussed in the context of our larger aims of contributing to international security and disarmament, and the discussions are therefore aimed at contributing to international security related to space and improving space security. The Open-ended Working Group (OEWG) on Reducing Space Threats through Norms, Rules and Principles of Responsible Behaviours has been an important contribution to that end. While the issues discussed in the Group have linkages to those discussed in the Fourth Committee on international cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space, they are also clearly distinct and should be discussed here.

Norway regrets that the Group was unable to adopt a substantive report despite the great efforts of many to achieve a consensus against the unyielding opposition of a very few. Nonetheless, the broad engagement of States, together with the dynamic and substantive discussions in the Open-ended Working Group, attest to the importance of continuing the efforts to reduce space threats. The work should be continued in a new OEWG with a focused mandate, as proposed in the draft resolution proposed by the United Kingdom (A/C.1/78/L.15/Rev.1). The behaviour-based approach continues to offer a way forward towards a legally binding instrument, political commitments or both. In Norway's view, form is secondary to the objective of reducing threats.

It has long been agreed among States that international law, including the Charter of the United Nations, applies to the conduct of States in outer space. It is obvious that in the case of armed conflict related to outer space, that would include international humanitarian law. As has also been noted by the International Committee of the Red Cross, recognizing the applicability of international humanitarian law does not legitimize the use of force in outer space, its militarization or its weaponization. The Charter obligates States to refrain from the threat or use of force against another State. The applicability of international humanitarian law does not diminish that

obligation either in space or on Earth. Transparency and confidence-building mechanisms contribute to reducing tensions and promoting a more secure outer space environment. The report of the Group of Governmental Experts on Transparency and Confidence-Building Measures in Outer Space Activities was an important contribution to the issue, and Norway welcomes the report of the Disarmament Commission on promoting their practical implementation (A/78/42, annex).

The Hague Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation is an important transparency and confidence-building measure, and Norway strongly supports its universalization. We call on its subscribers to implement its provisions and provide pre-launch notifications. Norway is also pleased to have supported the commitment to refraining from conducting destructive direct-ascent anti-satellite missile tests. That is a commitment fit to contribute to confidence-building.

As the importance of outer space continues to increase, so too does the importance of maintaining its security. Norway remains a steadfast proponent of seeking multilateral solutions to global challenges, including for a more secure outer space environment. There is a growing risk related to outer space security that States should resolve to manage together.

Mr. Soares Damico (Brazil): The Secretary-General's policy brief entitled "For all humanity — the future of outer space governance on outer space" outlines some important trends — the increase in the number of space actors; the declining costs of launching spacecraft, leading to an exponential growth in the number of vehicles in orbit and consequently to the densification of orbital positions; and, finally, the exponentially rising risks created by debris. To compound the scenario, where safety considerations are clearly growing, outer space cannot be insulated from security developments on Earth. A clear defining border between safety and security lies in the past. Critical infrastructure on Earth, such as communications infrastructure, is dependent and in fact over-reliant on satellites. As dependence and vulnerability are two sides of the same coin, it is natural that concerns are emerging about the possibility that outer space could become an arena for conflict. The development of offensive space capabilities by several States only strengthens that perception.

Concerns about security in outer space are no longer limited to a handful of spacefaring nations.

The Secretary-General's report highlights the fact that 91 states had at least one satellite in orbit by 2022. More than ever, outer space is indeed the province of humankind, as foreseen in article I of the 1967 Outer Space Treaty. Brazil enjoys space capabilities, aspires to become a fully-fledged spacefaring nation and is expanding its footprint. In keeping with those aspirations, we are naturally committed to ensuring that space is peaceful, stable, safe and accessible for all. In Brazil's view, its short-term priority is based on the obvious fact that every one of our scarce space assets is vital, and damage to them would inevitably compromise our critical infrastructure. Moreover, we prefer to avoid increased costs related to replacing damaged assets with more sophisticated and protected ones. Any immediate measures, irrespective of their character, binding or non-binding, therefore represent a net gain, adding survivability to our few and precious assets.

Nevertheless, that sense of urgency does not and should not stand in the way of our long-term objectives, chief among them the prevention of an arms race in outer space. Our ultimate goal is to curb the weaponization of outer space and to preserve that global commons for the benefit of humankind. In that regard, we share the aspirations of a majority of the international community, which has subscribed to various initiatives such as the Guidelines for the Long-term Sustainability of Outer Space Activities of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, adopted by consensus by the Committee, as well as other groups of experts and open-ended working groups mandated by the General Assembly. Despite useful discussions and the clarification of perspectives, with a few notable exceptions we are in the middle of a long string of failures in the efforts to find an elusive consensus on how to approach a comprehensive formulation that would put everyone on the same page. Assuming that this characterization of the situation in outer space is the right one, and based on our own very concrete and — excuse me for the pun — down-to-earth national interests, we believe that a consensus formula can be found.

As we see it, mistrust and a lack of confidence among spacefaring nations got the better of us and led to the quandary we find ourselves in — with two sets of initiatives, each claiming to be the broader one encompassing the other approach. The consequences, which have the nasty habit of imposing themselves post facto, are clear for all to see — the setting up

of multiple negotiating bodies that will strain our limited diplomatic resources by requiring us to attend competing structures that will keep us engaged for quite some time. Worse than that, with a mutually assured destruction clause attached, it will be very difficult to get over this mentality of an eye for an eye. That is a very unsatisfactory and perhaps irrational way of doing business.

Before we end up blinded, let me therefore clarify the Brazilian position, which seeks to reconcile perceptions at odds with each other. First, we favour ideas and we do not play favourites. We disavow the existence of original sins. We believe that the development of norms of responsible behaviour can play a useful role in tackling some immediate concerns in the intersection between safety and security. Moreover, that approach is geared to building confidence among the parties, which in turn will facilitate the long-term endeavour of developing a legally binding instrument on the prevention of an arms race in outer space. On the other hand, the development of norms is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for preventing such an arms race. Those two tracks should not be competing but complementing and reinforcing each other. We do not believe that is impossible to achieve and we are ready to contribute.

Mr. Musonda (Zambia): Zambia wishes to align itself with the statements made by the representatives of Indonesia and Nigeria on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and the Group of African States (see A/C.1/78/PV.16). I would now like to add the following remarks in my national capacity.

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

We may recall that on 2 December 2014, the General Assembly adopted two resolutions on preventing an arms race in outer space (69/31 and 69/32). The first, entitled "Prevention of an arms race in outer space",

calls on all States, in particular those with major space capabilities, to contribute actively to ensuring the peaceful use of outer space, prevent an arms race there and refrain from actions contrary to that objective. The second, entitled “No first placement of weapons in outer space”, emphasizes the prevention of an arms race in space and states that other measures may contribute to ensuring that weapons are not placed in outer space.

We strongly believe that global principles of responsible behaviour will contribute to increased international cooperation in space and to its peaceful exploration and use, as well as facilitating equitable access to outer space and increasing transparency and confidence in the conduct of space activities. Our considerations of responsible behaviour should include an assessment of the consequences for safety, sustainability and security in outer space and the potential effects of those consequences on international peace, security and stability, including for space operators and civilians.

Preventing an arms race in outer space is crucial to ensuring the equitable distribution of benefits derived from space exploration. Space activities contribute to scientific understanding, technological advances and economic opportunities. However, if an arms race were to occur, the focus would shift towards militaristic endeavours, neglecting the potential for mutually beneficial collaboration such as cooperation between international space agencies on missions to Mars or the moon. Preventing an arms race in outer space is essential to upholding global security, maintaining international stability and advancing humankind’s pursuit of knowledge and progress. By fostering international cooperation, enacting explicit bans on space-based weaponry and ensuring the equitable distribution of the benefits of space exploration, nations can collaborate in exploring and utilizing outer space for peaceful purposes. It is only through such efforts that humankind can propel itself towards a future of scientific discovery, technological advances and shared prosperity while safeguarding humankind from the devastating threats that an arms race in outer space could unleash. We want to emphasize that the benefits of outer space should be accessible to all countries, regardless of their levels of development. We urge for ensuring that outer space is used as a key driver in addressing global economic challenges rather than for military purposes.

Zambia would like to see all countries maintaining outer space as a peaceful and sustainable environment. We support all measures aimed at reducing threats to space systems and operations and preventing any outbreaks of conflict in outer space. We recognize that space continues to be an arena for competition and emphasize that steps should be taken to reduce uncertainty and manage the risk that such competition could lead to conflict. We remain firm in our advocacy for preventing an arms race in outer space, which will strengthen international security and stability and safeguard the free exploration and long-term use of the space environment for peaceful purposes. We will continue to advocate for responsible behaviour in outer space and to support a comprehensive approach to addressing the challenges, risks and threats to the peaceful use of outer space, in compliance with international law.

Ms. Sanabria Duarte (Paraguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): Paraguay reaffirms that the use of outer space, including the moon and other celestial bodies, should be for exclusively peaceful purposes, in accordance with international law. All space activity has an impact on humankind. The sustainable use of space must therefore be for the benefit of humankind, whatever our levels of social, economic, scientific or technological development may be. Paraguay is advancing its development of both space engineering and Earth observation applications, with an emphasis on capacity-building for the implementation of an independent and sustainable space programme. My country’s space policy has been in force since 2019, based on the principles of capacity-building, national development and the strengthening of international cooperation.

Paraguay would like to reaffirm its position on the prevention of an arms race in outer space, in view of the possibility that outer space could become a theatre of armed conflict, in contravention of the Charter of the United Nations and international law. In that respect, we stress the importance of achieving a binding and appropriate legal regime that can support the aspirations of all members of the international community to enjoy this common heritage. As we work on formulating an international instrument to regulate this issue, we consider the adoption of international transparency and confidence-building measures on outer space and the observance of existing United Nations guidelines and resolutions on the subject to be very important as well.

We should not fail to mention the consensus agreement that we reached last year within the framework of Working Group II of the Disarmament Commission. Our country would like to echo other delegations' statements highlighting the importance of the broader participation of women, which helps to yield more inclusive debates on international security issues and to identify existing, current and future threats, as well as actions and activities that could be considered irresponsible. Beyond that, through international cooperation, Paraguay has concluded more than 70 agreements at the national and international levels and has communicated its space activities to the United Nations, including its registration of Paraguay's first satellite, GuaraníSat-1, and its activation on two occasions of the International Charter on Space and Major Disasters, which allowed access to satellite data free of charge in order to improve decision-making in disaster risk reduction and humanitarian aid.

It should also be noted that in 2021 Paraguay supported and participated in the drafting of the convention establishing the Latin American and Caribbean Space Agency as an international organization with its own legal identity, able to act as a regional mechanism for cooperation between member States and the international community. Paraguay therefore reiterates its commitment to the peaceful use of outer space and supports cooperation between our countries in continuing to promote the exchange of information and experiences, among other initiatives, as fundamental tools on the path to generating trust and synergies.

Mr. Lebbaz (Algeria): At the outset, my delegation associates itself with the statements delivered by the representatives of Indonesia, on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, Nigeria, on behalf of the Group of African States, and Jordan, on behalf of the Group of Arab States, under the cluster "Outer space (disarmament aspects)" (see A/C.1/78/PV.16).

My delegation firmly condemns the massive aggression committed by the occupation forces against the defenceless and unarmed Palestinian population, whose women and children are being butchered and slaughtered every day before the eyes of the whole world. We call urgently for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza, for basic humanitarian and medical assistance to be allowed immediate entry into Gaza and for an end to the forced displacement of Palestinians.

Outer space and its celestial bodies are our common heritage. We must use them for exclusively peaceful purposes, working together in a spirit of cooperation for the benefit of all humankind. Militarizing or engaging in military conflicts in outer space would have serious consequences. It is therefore imperative for all Member States, especially those with major space capabilities, to prevent an arms race in outer space, thereby helping to protect international peace and security from grave danger. They should also promote and enhance international cooperation in space exploration and the peaceful uses of space, so that its benefits are made available to all.

The existing legal framework governing the use of outer space is important to preventing an arms race but is still inadequate in terms of tackling legitimate concerns related to preventing the militarization or weaponization of outer space. We must therefore strengthen and improve that framework by adopting a legally binding international instrument that specifically addresses the issue. The updated draft treaty text submitted to the Conference on Disarmament by the Russian Federation and China provides a good basis for further discussion and negotiation. We call on the Conference on Disarmament to begin negotiations on the issues related to preventing an arms race in outer space. As the multilateral negotiating forum for disarmament in the international community, it plays a leading role in conducting substantive negotiations on priority issues in the field of disarmament.

We welcome the adoption of the recommendations to promote the practical implementation of transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities with the goal of preventing an arms race in outer space, in conformity with the recommendations set out in the report of the Group of Governmental Experts on Transparency and Confidence-Building Measures in Outer Space Activities on this issue (see A/68/189) during the 2023 substantive session of the Disarmament Commission. However, we recognize that the increasing use of outer space demands that all States take further measures to ensure greater transparency, more confidence-building measures and the better provision of information. While my delegation emphasizes the priority of negotiating a legally binding instrument to strengthen the international legal regime for outer space, we also note that global and comprehensive voluntary measures to ensure transparency and confidence-building, reached

through broad international consultations, can be important measures for space activities. Nonetheless, we reiterate that such voluntary measures cannot replace the conclusion of a legally binding treaty on preventing an arms race in outer space.

We welcome the regular adoption of the draft resolutions entitled “Prevention of an arms race in outer space”, “No first placement of weapons in outer space” and “Further practical measures for the prevention of an arms race in outer space”. At the same time, we regret that the Open-ended Working Group on Reducing Space Threats through Norms, Rules and Principles of Responsible Behaviours, established pursuant to resolution 76/231, has concluded its mandate without reaching a common agreement. My delegation also welcomed the previous deliberations held by the Group of Governmental Experts on Further Practical Measures for the Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space, which was tasked with considering important elements of a legally binding international instrument on preventing an arms race in outer space. The General Assembly has emphasized that the Group’s work has made a significant contribution to the international efforts to conclude such a legally binding international instrument. We believe that all of these mechanisms and initiatives remind us that we are united in our desire to prevent an arms race in outer space. Outer space is a shared domain, and we must all work together to ensure that it is used solely for peaceful purposes.

Ms. Muñoz Ponce (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): My country endorses the statement made by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/78/PV.16), and I would like to add the following remarks in our national capacity.

Bolivia recognizes outer space as part of the common heritage of humankind, and in that context that it is the sovereign right of all States to participate in the exploration and use of outer space for exclusively peaceful purposes for the benefit and interest of all countries on an equal footing, without discrimination and regardless of their levels of scientific, economic or social development. We have seen space exploration activities lead to States’ deployment in support of their geopolitical, political and strategic interests, and that the number of private actors providing space services is increasing. Those are factors that could exacerbate current and future vulnerabilities in space and threats to its sustainability. There is also a risk of damaging

the space environment, which would have a devastating impact on Earth. In addition, we are witnessing growing tensions among major nations with space capabilities, which is increasing the need for controls and transparency in the uses of outer space.

The sustainability of space activities necessarily implies reviewing the existing relevant legal instruments. In that regard, we would like to reiterate the importance of negotiating a legally binding instrument with appropriate and effective verification provisions for strengthening the 1967 Outer Space Treaty. It is also important to keep in mind that international law and international humanitarian law are applicable to outer space. The Charter of the United Nations and our space treaties are the backbone of our global governance of outer space, with the goal of ensuring the maintenance of international peace and security and the promotion of international cooperation.

Bolivia reaffirms its position on the importance of preventing the militarization of outer space or an arms race there. It is essential to examine and adopt practical measures aimed at concluding agreements that can prevent the possibility of the placement of weapons in outer space or the use of force against space objects. We can see that the current legal regime applicable to space does not by itself guarantee the security, protection and legal restrictions that can prohibit such use or placement. By the same token, we hope that the work of the Group of Governmental Experts on Further Effective Measures for the Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space can arrive at conclusions on a consensus basis that will enable us to achieve agreements on substantive elements that would serve as a basis for future negotiations on an international legally binding instrument. We noted with satisfaction the adoption by consensus in the United Nations Disarmament Commission of recommendations to promote the practical implementation of transparency and confidence-building measures in activities in outer space in order to prevent an arms race. Such confidence-building measures can contribute to the development of better understanding among nations, greater sustainability and the improved protection of daily space activities.

We believe that the challenges that we are confronting can only be dealt with through multilateralism. My delegation would like to highlight the world’s technological and scientific achievements in space, which could be determining factors for development.

But they must be used for purely peaceful purposes. The exploration of outer space must be conducted based on the principles of solidarity with and technology transfer for the global South, as well as active support for capacity-building and innovative development.

Ms. Gómez Sardiñas (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): Cuba endorses the statement delivered by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/78/PV.16).

We have come to this meeting of the First Committee pleased about the fact that the Disarmament Commission adopted recommendations pertaining to transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space at the conclusion of its review cycle this year. However, it is not encouraging that there are continuing attempts to reduce the paths towards a legally binding international instrument for the prevention of an arms race in outer space, despite the fact that the placement of arms in space and its potential weaponization are the major threats that we are facing in this area. The Group of Governmental Experts established pursuant to resolution 77/250 is charged with working towards formulating such an instrument, and we hope that the format for discussing this essential topic in the area of international disarmament and security could be expanded through the establishment of an open-ended working group that would enable all States to participate in the process. In our view, an international legally binding instrument for the prevention of an arms race in outer space that includes the prevention of the placement of weapons there should also prohibit the threat or use of force against satellites and other space objects. We believe that the draft treaty presented by Russia and China at the Conference on Disarmament is a good basis for negotiations on such an instrument.

We Member States have a duty to promote the use of space for exclusively peaceful purposes. Space technologies should contribute to all peoples' genuine aspirations for peace and development, including the implementation of the goals and objectives envisioned in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Such technologies must absolutely not be used to undermine the sovereignty of nations. We are against the creation of an arms race in outer space, the enhancement of space weapons and the presence or placement of military equipment in space. We reject any threat or use of force in outer space. We are concerned about the extensive network of spy satellites, which are incompatible with peace and the development of peoples, and about the

continuing saturation of the geostationary orbit with space debris.

We support and encourage the policy of no first placement of arms of any kind in outer space. In that regard, we believe that voluntary transparency and confidence-building measures in this area are appropriate and necessary until a treaty is signed. However, such measures can never be considered an alternative to a legally binding instrument. Unlike the limitations that are implied in the implementation of voluntary measures by States, a legally binding instrument that fills existing legal gaps would establish obligations in order to effectively address threats to outer space.

We demand an end to unilateral coercive measures that hinder or impede developing countries' efforts to develop space activities for peaceful purposes, as well as the full, effective and non-discriminatory implementation of the principles and international treaties governing outer space. We advocate firmly for the legitimate right of all States to have access to outer space on an equal footing and without discrimination, and to benefit from cooperation in capacity-building and the transfer of space applications and technology. We have a moral duty to preserve outer space as a common heritage of humankind for current and future generations.

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

Archbishop Caccia (Holy See): The environment of outer space envelops us regardless of national borders and extends indefinitely outward. Since the first satellite orbited the Earth in October 1957, outer space has remained relatively peaceful. The Outer Space Treaty prohibits the placement or stationing of weapons of mass destruction in that environment or on celestial bodies. Beyond that important prohibition, the military use of outer space remains relatively uncontrolled, risking the prospect of a potential arms race. Indeed, satellites are used for monitoring military activities on Earth, as well as for military communications and navigation. In a more concerning development, numerous States have conducted tests of anti-satellite weapons, which are crowding the low Earth orbit with ever more debris, hampering the peaceful use of this increasingly important domain.

In response to that challenge, the First Committee should support the continuation of efforts aimed at

excluding direct-ascent testing of anti-satellite missiles, building on resolution 77/41, adopted by the General Assembly last year, which condemned such testing. Beyond that, the Conference on Disarmament should be supported, under its agenda on the prevention of an arms race in outer space, in negotiating undertakings to preclude the use or stationing in outer space or on Earth of destructive capabilities aimed at objects in outer space. The Holy See condemns outright any efforts aimed at extending to outer space the weapons and military capabilities that cause immense suffering and destruction on Earth. As a response to the increased expenditures on researching and developing outer space military capabilities, the Committee should return to its main objective, that of general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control, a goal that an overwhelming number of States have adopted. If outer space is weaponized, that noble goal will only move further out of reach.

While a legally binding agreement on the prevention of an arms race in outer space may prove difficult to achieve in the short term, non-binding measures can help build trust. Such measures include the implementation of norms and transparency- and confidence-building measures. In that regard, the Holy See welcomes the convening of the Open-ended Working Group on Reducing Space Threats through Norms, Rules and Principles of Responsible Behaviours. In conducting its work, the Group should ensure that its agenda does not duplicate efforts already under way in the Conference on Disarmament and the Disarmament Commission. Furthermore, my delegation regrets that the Disarmament Commission failed to achieve consensus on recommendations to promote the practical implementation of transparency- and confidence-building measures in outer space. Those measures could materially support the maintenance of an outer space free of weapons, for example by establishing keep-out zones around satellites and providing for pre-launch inspections of payloads to ensure their benign nature. The discussions on outer space in the Disarmament Commission constitute a confidence-building measure in and of themselves and should provide an impetus for concretizing trust-building efforts.

In conclusion, I want to reiterate the importance of preserving the peaceful nature of outer space, given the ever more prominent role it plays in commerce, development and research. I hope that the Committee's

work can prevent the evolution of technologies and capabilities that would militarize the celestial domain.

The Chair: The Committee has now heard the last speaker on the cluster "Outer space (disarmament aspects)".

I shall now call on delegations that have requested the right of reply. I would like to remind speakers 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.

Mr. Kim In Chol (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): My delegation feels compelled to take the floor to respond to the statement by South Korea.

South Korea should not misuse this forum to pursue its sinister political agenda by raising an issue that is not consistent with the theme of this meeting and the nature of the First Committee. South Korea should cool its head, heated by its desire for confrontation. It should take another clear look at the Charter of the United Nations and the provisions of the Outer Space Treaty before groundlessly condemning and denying the right of a sovereign State to satellite launches and space development. The launch of a military reconnaissance satellite falls entirely under the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's right to self-defence, and nobody, including South Korea, is entitled to take issue with an individual country's sovereign right. If the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's satellite launch is to be sanctioned, the United States and all the other countries that have already launched thousands of satellites should be subject to condemnation. South Korea's allegation is a mere sophism and self-contradiction. The far-fetched logic that based on resolutions of the Security Council, other countries are allowed to launch satellites while the Democratic People's Republic of Korea should not be permitted to do so, irrespective of its purpose, is clearly wrong and a serious violation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's right to use outer space.

With regard to the illogical argument that our satellite launch contributes to the advancement of nuclear delivery capabilities, it makes no sense to claim that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has persisted in seeking to acquire delivery technology through satellite launches, given the fact that it has already been operating an intercontinental ballistic missile force. Even as we speak, the United States is exhaustively monitoring every movement of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea by placing a

huge number of reconnaissance satellites, high-altitude unmanned reconnaissance planes and other kinds of reconnaissance assets in the sky above the Korean Peninsula. It is as if a guilty party were filing a lawsuit first. It is illogical to condemn the Democratic People's Republic of Korea for its military reconnaissance satellite launch. In addition, the United States has deployed its Space Force in South Korea as an advance base for carrying out its Pacific strategy, and for the first time it recently involved the Space Force in Ulchi Freedom Shield, a nuclear war rehearsal for aggression. The United States claims that it is deploying the Space Force in the Asia-Pacific region to defend its mainland and protect the security of its allies, but that is nothing more than camouflage covering up a scenario for a pre-emptive attack on countries that are independent and anti-United States.

Now that the United States is hell-bent on space militarization, with the ultimate aim of launching a pre-emptive nuclear attack by massively introducing its Space Force into the Korean Peninsula and its vicinity, our space development, including with military reconnaissance satellites, is an indispensable strategic option intended to guarantee the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's security interests and right to exist. The dogs bark but the caravan moves on. The more the United States and South Korea step up their hostile pressure and military threats against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the more vigorously and courageously the Democratic People's Republic of Korea will exercise its legitimate right as a sovereign State, including by launching military reconnaissance satellites to safeguard its sovereignty and security interests. The international community should raise its vigilance and voice against the danger and gravity of the unlawful, arbitrary attempts by the United States and its followers to prevent the Democratic People's Republic of Korea from exercising its sovereign rights.

Mr. Vorontsov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We strongly reject the provocative statements by a number of Western delegations, including the United States and New Zealand, that are directly aimed against the Russian draft resolution entitled "Further practical measures for the prevention of an arms race in outer space" (A/C.1/78/L.55). Russia's proposal is aimed at ensuring the continuing and uninterrupted consideration of all aspects of the prevention of an arms race in outer space and doing it inclusively, comprehensively and in line with established practice.

The mandate of the future open-ended working group whose establishment we are proposing will have a broad, unifying agenda and will take into account the results of the work of all the specialized forums up until then. In particular, we propose that it include consideration of and recommendations on substantive elements for an international legally binding instrument on the prevention of an arms race in outer space, including the prevention of the placement of weapons in outer space, among other things. The mandate should also include consideration of various aspects of the prevention of an arms race in outer space in the context of a multilateral legally binding instrument on such prevention. That responds fully to the priorities of the world community that have been put forward within the framework of this thematic discussion.

We call on all Member States to support and co-sponsor the draft prepared by the Russian Federation, as well as the other draft resolutions on no first placement of weapons in outer space (A/C.1/78/L.53) and on transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities (A/C.1/78/L.54). Our intention is to advance the implementation of the goals of the prevention of an arms race in outer space, and in that regard we need to realize that the concept of so-called responsible behaviour in outer space, proposed to the international community in 2020, was from the outset not based on consensus and controversial in nature, and continues to be so. Its purpose is quite another and is aimed not at resolving the issues of the prevention of an arms race in outer space but rather of replacing it with the goal of regulating military and arms activity in outer space.

The results of the work of the Open-ended Working Group established pursuant to resolution 76/231 confirmed our concerns, showing unambiguously that not only was the Group unable to achieve a rapprochement in Member States' positions, but it in fact provoked an extremely serious split over fundamental aspects of the prevention of an arms race in outer space. Instead of being a unifying platform that could bring the international community closer to the goals of preventing an arms race, the Group deepened the differences among its Member States on all of the issues in its mandate. The result was that it was unable to achieve a substantive outcome for its work. All of that shows only one thing, which is that the concept of responsible behaviour in outer space is destructive, very narrowly focused, incapable of realizing the goals

of the prevention of an arms race in outer space and creates further fragmentation of the discussion on the topic rather than consolidating it.

The conclusion here is obvious. When an agreement is made on some fragmentary, non-inclusive norms and principles on regulating space activity — founded on concepts that were not based on consensus from the outset, that do not take into account the approaches of all Member States and are focused on ensuring a small number of States' domination of space rather than attaining the key goals of the prevention of an arms race in space — it is unable by its very nature to assist in maintaining international peace and security or preventing that arms race. It will lead only to escalating tensions in space, further division in the global community and restrictions on equal access to outer space for the purposes of research and peaceful use. That gives rise to a logical question regarding the usefulness and added value of the divisive and non-consensus concept of responsible behaviour in outer space generally and specifically of the proposed resumption of the activities of an open-ended working group on the prevention of an arms race there. For us the answer is obvious. We see no reason to discuss the concept of responsible behaviour further.

Mr. Kalmar (Israel): I did not plan on asking for the floor to exercise my right of reply, but the previous baseless and absurd statements made on behalf of the Group of Arab States (see A/C.1/78/PV.16) and Iran have left me no choice.

First, the accusations by the Arab Group about Israel's statements this week being "out of context" and "unrelated to the First Committee" are merely an effort to hide the inconvenient fact that members of the Arab Group have declined to condemn Hamas's heinous acts of terror. That raises a few questions. Why is it that they have refrained from condemning Hamas for launching against Israel one of the most barbaric terrorist acts ever witnessed, an unprovoked attack that led to the brutal slaughter of babies? Why do they not condemn the tragedy that Hamas is bringing upon innocent Palestinian people, including the casualties caused by a Palestinian Islamic Jihad rocket that exploded on 17 October at a hospital in Gaza? Why does the Arab Group automatically echo the deceitful announcements — the fake news — that Hamas publicizes even at the price of stirring up violence throughout the region? And how does the Arab Group feel about the recent call by Iran's Supreme Leader

to proxies around the Middle East to prepare attacks on civilians in Israel? Perhaps the international community should ask members of the Arab Group those very questions.

I can assure the Committee that it will not receive answers to those questions. The Arab Group is too busy creating baseless lies about my country. It is said that a lie can travel halfway around the world while the truth is still putting on its shoes. I am here to remind everyone once again that a lie does not become the truth when repeated an endless number of times, or even when it is repeated again and again by certain Member States in this room and across United Nations forums.

We are here in the First Committee to discuss ways to reduce arms and contribute to non-proliferation. The representatives of Iran turned to lies in their remarks against my country today and yesterday (see A/C.1/78/PV.16), but they were correct about one thing. The representative of Iran said yesterday that actions speak louder than words. While members of the Iranian delegation are sitting in this room and discussing matters such as confidence-building measures, transparency and international cooperation and assistance, Iran is financing Hamas's lethal activities with more \$100 million a year. Think about how much ammunition, rockets and other weapons that amount buys. Think about the kinds of weapons it may buy in the future. Think about how many lives it puts at stake — the lives of Israelis and Palestinians alike.

Actions therefore do indeed speak louder than words. In its genocidal quest to eliminate Israel, Iran will cynically step on whomever it needs to, including innocent Palestinians. We urge everyone in this room, from every region, to ask Iran if its actions speak louder than words, and when it will stop pretending to strive for world peace while actually striving to annihilate Israel. When will it stop financing and weaponizing Hamas in Gaza, Hizbullah in Lebanon and the Houthis in Yemen to promote its selfish interests and destabilize the Middle East? As for Syria, I will not waste any more precious time, but one really needs a sense of humour to take lectures from a regime that has been killing its own people for more than a decade, including with chemical weapons.

Israel will continue battling disinformation. We will continue combating terrorism, and we will continue to defend our people and the truth. We will remain strong for our ancestors, who dreamed of a safe

home for the Jewish people, for this generation, which is now in pain, and for our future generations.

Mr. Turner (United States of America): I would like to respond to a number of statements on a number of subjects that were made yesterday (see A/C.1/78/PV.16) and today. To begin with, the United States, as President Biden has said, mourns the loss of every innocent life, whether it is that of an Israeli, Palestinian or American citizen. Yesterday the President also announced an additional \$100 million in humanitarian assistance for the Palestinian people in Gaza and the West Bank. All that said, we must reiterate, just as our Israeli colleague has pointed out, that the 7 October attack was indeed a Hamas terrorist attack on Israel. We stand by Israel and support its right to self-defence. With regard to the bombing at the Al-Ahli Baptist Hospital, our intelligence community is doing a rigorous review but has also assessed that Israel was not responsible for the explosion. That assessment is based on the available reporting, including intelligence, missile activity, overhead imagery and open-source video and images of the incident. The explosion appears to be the result of an errant rocket fired by a terrorist group in Gaza.

Turning to the remarks that our Russian colleague just made, I would simply note that the lack of a substantial outcome in the recent Open-ended Working Group on Reducing Space Threats through Norms, Rules and Principles of Responsible Behaviours was the result of one State that did not wish to reach a consensus. That is why it failed. That said, however, I understand why Russia might have some difficulties understanding responsible behaviour at this time in history, given its invasion of Ukraine.

Lastly, in response to the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, we would note that those launches use ballistic-missile technology, which brazenly violates multiple Security Council resolutions, raises tensions and risks destabilizing the security situation in the region and beyond. The United States' long-standing bilateral and trilateral military exercises with the Republic of Korea and Japan are purely defensive in nature and are intended to maintain force readiness and preserve regional security. Unlike the ballistic-missile launches and other activities of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, they are not prohibited by any Security Council resolutions. As the United States-Republic of Korea military exercises are routine and defensive in nature, we reduce risk and pursue transparency by announcing the exercises in

advance, including dates and activities. That approach stands in stark contrast to the unannounced missile launches and other military activities of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, which pose an unacceptable risk to civil maritime and aviation traffic and increase uncertainty in the region.

Mr. Kim Sunghoon (Republic of Korea): I regret that my delegation is compelled to take the floor to exercise the right of reply in response to the statement made by the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. We would like to make it clear that any launch that uses ballistic-missile technology — regardless of what it carries or its success — can contribute to the further advancement of ballistic-missile technology capable of delivering nuclear weapons. With each test, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is getting closer to achieving its goal, regardless of its illegal intercontinental ballistic missile programme. That is why the Security Council has adopted many resolutions that prohibit any activity using ballistic-missile technology. Whatever the deceptive and false narrative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea says, its launch does not fall under the category of the peaceful use of outer space, which is the essence of the debate on this cluster. What it does is anything but peaceful.

The principles and objectives of the Charter of the United Nations do not confer on a Member State the right to pursue obviously dangerous and threatening activities under the veneer of a sovereign right. We also note the statement made two days ago by the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea emphasizing the principles and objectives of the Charter, which include the prohibition of the use of force or threat of force against a sovereign State. However, what the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is pursuing under the guise of a so-called satellite launch runs counter to the very principle that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has emphatically stressed. We call that a double standard. We therefore strongly call on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to refrain from its unlawful acts, which constitute a flagrant violation of multiple Security Council resolutions.

Mr. Alqaisi (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the Group of Arab States, I am delivering this statement in response to what the representative of Israel said in his statement about the grave situation in Gaza.

The Arab Group once again expresses in the strongest terms its condemnation and denunciation of the continued Israeli aggression against the Gaza Strip, which has killed innocent civilians. The Group also believes that the disastrous shelling of the Al-Mamadani Hospital is a grave escalation, and we reiterate our condemnation of that heinous crime against unarmed innocents.

Israel is exploiting our forum in a desperate attempt to falsify the facts. However, those attempts have been exposed in painful scenes in which civilians, including children, are being killed, houses, educational and medical facilities are being destroyed and mothers are crying and despair spreading in the occupied Palestinian territory and throughout the region. We would like to remind everyone here that international law cannot be applied selectively. The Arab Group affirms the need for bringing an immediate end to the war on Gaza, protecting civilians, lifting the siege and delivering humanitarian assistance to the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip. The Arab Group rejects any attempts to forcibly displace Palestinians and reiterates its rejection of policies of collective punishment, whether through siege, famine or the displacement of the population of Gaza. Such shameful acts violate humanitarian and ethical values in their clear contradiction of international humanitarian law, particularly the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, the Charter of the United Nations and the relevant resolutions of international legitimacy.

The Arab Group warns that if the war does not stop or broadens in scope, with repercussions, the entire region will be in danger and the result will be a catastrophe with dangerous consequences. We stress that we will remain at the forefront in defending the rights of our Palestinian brothers and their just cause. We reiterate that the main reason for the conflict is the occupation, which is the cause of all this evil. The only way to achieve peace is by ending the occupation so as to ensure the establishment of an independent Palestinian State, on the 4 June 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, in line with resolutions of international legitimacy and the Arab Peace Initiative.

In conclusion, the Arab Group expresses its deep condolences to the families of the martyrs in the Gaza Strip. May God grant them peace and the wounded a speedy recovery.

Mr. Ghorbanpour Najafabadi (Islamic Republic of Iran): I have asked for the floor to exercise my right of reply to the continued irrelevant and baseless allegations that the representative of the Israeli regime has made about my country. I reject his absurd statement.

A regime that has threatened us two times with nuclear annihilation — once in 2018 and again in the General Assembly at its seventy-eighth session, just a few days ago — has no eligibility, let alone a right, to point fingers at us and make baseless allegations. We have already touched on their secret programmes for weapons of mass destruction, which are a serious threat to the entire region and the world. And I refer everyone to previous statements that we have made in this room.

Repeated baseless references to Iran cannot distract the international community from the Israeli regime's daily crimes in Palestine and beyond. The regime alone is responsible for those crimes. It has demonstrated an alarming disregard for human rights, boasting about issuing advance warnings of invasions of homes and hospitals within the occupied territory. Such actions are unequivocal breaches of international humanitarian law, which explicitly prohibits such attacks. Regrettably, the past few days have witnessed further atrocities committed by the regime. Let me start from where I left off and list the regime's recent atrocity crimes committed against defenceless Palestinians in flagrant violation of international law, including international humanitarian law. It has committed serious violations of the laws and customs applicable in international armed conflict within the established framework of international law, including intentionally directing attacks at the civilian population or at individual civilians who were not taking a direct part in the hostilities.

Entire families have been targeted and are under the rubble. The Aboudan family was holed up at home in the Bureij camp in the centre of the Gaza Strip. They all kept checking their phones to make sure that there had been no message from the Israeli army telling them to evacuate their home. The regime intentionally directs attacks at civilian objects — that is, objects that are not military objectives. It intentionally directs attacks against personnel, installations, material, units and vehicles involved in a humanitarian assistance mission or peacekeeping mission in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and entitled to the protection given to civilian or civilian objects, under the international law on armed conflict. At least 15

employees of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East have been killed in the Israeli regime's attacks since the start of the hostilities. It intentionally launches attacks in the knowledge that they will cause incidental loss of life or injury to civilians, damage to civilian objects and widespread, long-term and severe damage to the natural environment, which is clearly excessive in relation to the concrete and direct military advantage anticipated. It intentionally directs attacks against buildings dedicated to religion, education, art, science or charitable purposes, historical monuments, hospitals and places where the sick and wounded are collected, which are not military objectives. Just yesterday, the regime bombed one of the world's oldest and most significant churches in Gaza, resulting in more than six deaths and many more injuries among the civilians who had sought refuge in the church.

The list is excessive and more horrifying crimes are being added daily. With all the crimes that have been recorded, we should all stand against these weapons of mass deception and not believe the regime's propaganda. It is up to the international community to hold it accountable for committing such serious crimes.

Mr. Al Ashkar (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to respond to the remarks made by the representative of Israel.

At the outset, my delegation categorically rejects what the representative of Israel said in his statement about my country. Such allegations are common practice among the representatives of that entity. They use them as a means to distract attention from Israel's grave violations of international law, including crimes of genocide and aggression. Israel ignores international law and has continued to violate the rights of the Palestinian people and practise organized State terrorism. The international community must hold it accountable for its crimes and violations of international law and the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations.

The entity whose representative has given us a lesson on distinguishing between killing and self-defence has a long history of killing, crime, ethnic cleansing and the usurpation of legitimate rights. It may be that its representatives have short memories, as they see only their own illusions, ambitions and expansionist interests, and how to usurp rights by force. However, the reality is not as they would like to see it.

I do not feel compelled to find arguments to respond to the ridiculous allegations by the representative of Israel, the country that is the sponsor of terrorism in our region. We have recently seen a serious escalation in Israel's criminal practices, resulting in unprecedented numbers of victims. The region is experiencing tension and instability, as demonstrated by the carnage perpetrated by Israel at Al-Mamadani Hospital. We reject any attempts to claim that other parties are responsible, as the facts refute that. My delegation condemns all those Israeli crimes and practices in the strongest terms. We also denounce those who support those practices and the silence about them on the part of States that declare themselves protectors of international humanitarian law. Their silence makes them complicit with the perpetrators of those crimes and demonstrates the double standards of their policies.

Stopping the bloodshed must be a priority for the international community. In that context, we call for an immediate end to the criminal Israeli aggression and for the urgent delivery of humanitarian assistance to all in need in the Gaza Strip. We also condemn in the strongest terms Israel's determination to forcibly displace more than 1 million Gazans. However, it comes as no surprise to us, considering that Israel was created on a basis of terrorism and the mass displacement of Palestinians. As for the accusations that have been made about the use of chemical weapons, the representative of an entity that has a record of hundreds of documented crimes and massacres, an entity based on occupation, killing, destruction and bombing occupants in their houses, has no right to make accusations about Syria.

Mr. Vorontsov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We feel compelled to exercise our right of reply for a second time in order to respond to the latest attempts by the delegation of the United States to mislead the international community and to continue spreading insinuations about the Russian Federation that are utterly divorced from reality, as if the Russian Federation were responsible for every international event everywhere in the world. We want to once again reject any attempts to accuse us of various aspects related to the conduct of our special military operation. We are strongly opposed to such questions being raised, especially when discussing topics that have nothing to do with it.

With regard to the Open-ended Working Group on Reducing Space Threats through Norms, Rules and Principles of Responsible Behaviours established

pursuant to resolution 76/231, we are once again seeing the United States delegation make unfounded attempts to blame one State — that is, Russia — for the disappointing outcome of the Group's work. We urge delegations to familiarize themselves with the records of the Group's deliberations, including the video recordings of those meetings. It will become clear to all that this has nothing to do with the truth or the real state of affairs. The reason for the Group's unsatisfactory results is the broad divisions between the positions of entire groups of States regarding the very concept of responsible behaviour in outer space. Right now we can see that those differences are insuperable. We therefore consider it to be devoid of added value and that there is no sense in reconstituting the Group and continue discussions on a concept that is controversial and on which there is no consensus. Not only will it not bring meaningful results, but it will only provoke further division within the international community.

We need to focus on solving the real problems related to preventing an arms race in outer space and developing legally binding norms to that end. We believe that our proposal for further practical measures to prevent an arms race in outer space and the establishment of an open-ended working group with a broad and comprehensive mandate is aimed precisely at solving those real problems.

Mr. Kim In Chol (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): My delegation is compelled to take the floor to exercise its right of reply for a second time in response to the provocative statements by the representatives of the United States and South Korea, which we categorically reject.

The United States and South Korea alleged that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is not allowed to launch a military reconnaissance satellite under Security Council resolutions. Let me ask one question. Do they mean that we have to launch satellites via balloon? Even if we did so, it is most likely that they would allege that it was illegal. They should not make fools of themselves. It is really disappointing to witness such a lack of professionalism in a forum where diplomats and experts have gathered to discuss disarmament and international security. Bias and ignorance breed absurdity. To make it clear once again, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's launch of a military reconnaissance satellite is an appropriate countermeasure for coping with the military threats posed by United States and its vassal forces, which have

already crossed red lines, and an exercise of our right to self-defence aimed at safeguarding our sovereignty and territorial integrity.

The United States absurdly argues that its joint military exercises are not prohibited by the Security Council. But that itself attests to the fact that United States is exploiting the Council as an instrument for hegemony, high-handedness and arbitrary practices. If the joint military exercises are for defence purposes, why are they not carried out far away from the Korean Peninsula rather than on its very doorstep? Calling on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to abide by unlawful resolutions of the Security Council is an extortionate demand for conceding all sovereign rights to the United States, which is a belligerent party. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea has never recognized the Security Council resolutions that infringe on our rights as a sovereign State and will never be bound by them, now or in the future.

Peace and security on the Korean Peninsula cannot be guaranteed by any resolution invented by the United States' political machinery but will rather be ensured by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's powerful self-defence capabilities. We are well aware of the protracted nature of our confrontation with the United States and will do everything we can to bolster our war deterrent in an all-inclusive direction, cognizant of the long-term threats and challenges. The more desperately the United States and South Korea escalate their confrontational moves against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the more squarely and offensively the Democratic People's Republic of Korea will exercise its sovereignty and its legitimate right to self-defence to save our country.

Mr. Turner (United States of America): I am taking the floor to respond to what our Russian colleague has said about some of the notions of responsible behaviour.

Just yesterday (see A/C.1/78/PV.16), he stated that satellites that are used to support Ukraine in its legitimate right to self-defence against Russia's illegal invasion are legitimate targets for retaliation. That sounds like a direct threat from Russia to use force in outer space, and it does not seem to be responsible behaviour.

If we are to truly address the prevention of an arms race in outer space, we must also acknowledge that destructive direct-ascent anti-satellite missile testing also contributes to mistrust and instability and does not constitute responsible behaviour. Nor should we

forget that it was Russia that conducted cyberattacks on Ukrainian satellite communications terminals on the first day of its illegal invasion of Ukraine. The cyberattacks took out personal and commercial Internet users and even wind farms throughout Europe because of the irresponsible manner in which they were conducted, in yet another example of irresponsible behaviour.

Finally, the United States notes that the Russian Federation conducted tests of a space-based anti-satellite weapon by releasing projectiles in orbit in 2017 and 2020. The Russians have deployed satellites with weapons in orbit today, despite being the principal author of the draft resolution entitled “No first placement of weapons in outer space”.

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

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

The non-fulfilment of commitments and obligations assumed under the relevant international legally binding instruments, especially on conventional weapons, continues to pose threats to global peace and security. NAM will continue to affirm the sovereign right of States to acquire, manufacture, export, import and retain conventional arms and relevant parts, components and ammunition for their self-defence and security needs. NAM remains deeply concerned about the illicit transfer, manufacture and circulation of small arms and light weapons, their excessive accumulation and uncontrolled spread to unauthorized recipients in many regions of the world and the challenges posed by their possession by terrorists, illegal armed groups and transnational criminal organizations. NAM calls on all States, in particular major producing States, to ensure that the supply of small arms and light weapons is limited solely to Governments or to entities duly authorized by them.

NAM also underlines the need for the full, balanced and effective implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and the International Tracing Instrument, and in that regard stresses the urgent need to intensify efforts to promote international cooperation and assistance. NAM takes note of the successful convening of the Eighth Biennial Meeting of States to Consider

the Implementation of the Programme of Action, held in July 2022, and the consensus adoption of its outcome document. To highlight the need for capacity-building in this field, NAM welcomes the Meeting’s decision to establish a standing dedicated fellowship training programme on small arms and light weapons, particularly for developing countries, and encourages its speedy implementation.

Recognizing the adverse humanitarian impact caused by the use of cluster munitions, NAM calls for providing the necessary financial, technical and humanitarian assistance for unexploded cluster munitions clearance operations. We take note of the adoption of the final report of the Open-ended Working Group on Conventional Ammunition (A/78/111) and the Working Group’s agreement to recommend to the Assembly the adoption of the Global Framework for Through-life Conventional Ammunition Management. The Framework is voluntary and contains a set of political commitments for strengthening and promoting initiatives on through-life conventional ammunition management and addressing the existing gaps in it. NAM continues to deplore the use in conflict situations, in contravention of international humanitarian law, of anti-personnel mines designed to maim, kill and terrorize innocent civilians. We call on all States in a position to do so to provide the necessary financial, technical and humanitarian assistance for landmine clearance operations. NAM States parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction reiterate their commitment to the full implementation of the Oslo Action Plan.

NAM States parties to the Arms Trade Treaty call for the Treaty’s balanced, transparent and objective implementation, in strict accordance with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the inherent right of every State to security and to individual or collective self-defence. NAM also underscores that its implementation should in no way affect the sovereign right of States to acquire, manufacture, export, import and retain conventional arms and their parts and components for their self-defence and security needs and the maintenance of the territorial integrity of its member States. NAM States parties to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) and its Protocols encourage other States to become party to the Convention and its Protocols.

NAM is of the view that lethal autonomous weapon systems raise a number of ethical, legal, moral and technical issues and questions related to international peace and security, which should be thoroughly deliberated on and examined in the context of compliance with international law, including international humanitarian law and international human rights law. NAM States parties to the CCW welcomed the efforts to advance their positions during the meetings of the Group of Governmental Experts on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems, in particular in relation to the need for new legally binding provisions for addressing the humanitarian and international security challenges posed by emerging technologies in the area of lethal autonomous weapon systems. NAM recognizes the significant imbalance in the production, possession and trade in conventional weapons between the industrialized and the non-aligned countries and calls for the industrialized States to significantly reduce their activities in those areas with a view to enhancing international and regional peace and security.

Lastly, NAM expresses its concern about the ongoing increases in global military expenditures, which could otherwise be spent on development needs. We further stress the importance of reducing military expenditures in accordance with the principle of undiminished security at the lowest level of armaments, and we urge all States to devote the resources made available as a result to economic and social development, particularly the fight against poverty.

Mr. Mao (Cambodia): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

ASEAN aligns itself with the statement just delivered by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.

In the light of the current situation, which is marked by conflicts and political tensions, ASEAN is gravely concerned about the illicit proliferation of conventional weapons worldwide, which exacerbates violence and instability, prolongs poverty and undermines human welfare. ASEAN strongly believes that effective regulation and control of conventional weapons are essential to preserving peace, stability and sustainable development. We reiterate that the implementation of the relevant international agreements on conventional weapons should be in compliance with the fundamental principles of the Charter of the United Nations and

international law. We also acknowledge that States have a sovereign right to acquire and manage their conventional inventory for self-defence and for safeguarding national security.

ASEAN believes that sustained international action is required to advance disarmament. We remain interested in the continued development of various frameworks and international legally binding instruments, including the ninth Conference of States Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty. ASEAN also looks forward to the convening of the twenty-first Meeting of the States Parties to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, which is to be held in Geneva in November. ASEAN welcomed the adoption by consensus of the final report of the Eighth Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and its International Tracing Instrument and looks forward to the fourth United Nations Conference to Review Progress Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects in 2024. We welcome the adoption of the final report of the Open-ended Working Group to Elaborate a Set of Political Commitments as a New Global Framework That Will Address Existing Gaps in Through-life Ammunition Management (A/78/111).

ASEAN has also been working diligently to reinforce the disarmament machinery in the region and beyond. We continue to address arms smuggling through the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Transnational Crime. The annual meetings of ASEAN Chiefs of Police enable stronger regional cooperation in transnational crime investigations. Through those and other ASEAN-led mechanisms such as the ASEAN Regional Forum, we have worked effectively to combat the smuggling of small arms and light weapons, as well as other related transnational crimes in the region. ASEAN is pleased with the progress made by the Senior Officials' Meeting of the Central Authorities on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters in ensuring the effective implementation of the ASEAN Treaty on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters, which strengthens Member States' capacity and enhances cooperation to combat transnational crimes.

There is a need to address the threat posed by the use of improvised explosive devices, particularly by non-State actors. ASEAN has taken note of the outcome

of the Annual Conference of the High Contracting Parties to Amended Protocol II to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, and of the fact that the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons is tackling potential threats arising from lethal autonomous weapons systems, including their possible acquisition by armed non-State actors. A robust and future-proof legally binding instrument is needed to counter those threats.

ASEAN reiterates the significance of mine action in national rehabilitation and sustainable development and welcomes efforts to promote mine action at the global level, including at the United Nations. ASEAN commends the role of the ASEAN Regional Mine Action Centre as a centre of excellence in promoting ASEAN's efforts to address the issue of explosive remnants of war for interested ASEAN member States and to raise awareness of the danger of explosive remnants of war among the communities affected. ASEAN expresses appreciation to its dialogue partners, external partners and international organizations for contributing to undertaking projects and the operationalization of the ASEAN Regional Mine Action Centre. It is imperative that demining projects be developed with a comprehensive approach that includes victim support and a strong emphasis on community development in order to protect our people, particularly women and children, from the catastrophic effects of landmines. ASEAN urges all States parties, particularly developed countries, and the international community to provide the necessary financial, technical, and humanitarian assistance for the reintegration and rehabilitation of victims.

To conclude, ASEAN reaffirms its commitment to combating the illicit trade in conventional weapons and calls on all States to work together to halt illegal trading activities in order to ensure that we are all safe and that our development efforts can continue without disruptions.

Mr. Mahmud (Nigeria): The Group of African States aligns itself with the statement just delivered by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.

The Group remains deeply concerned about the illicit trade, transfer, manufacture, possession and circulation of small arms and light weapons and their excessive accumulation and uncontrolled spread in many regions of the world, particularly on the

continent of Africa, as they negatively affect Africa's socioeconomic development, peace and security. In that regard, the African Group attaches great importance to the central role of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and of its International Tracing Instrument. They are crucial multilateral tools dedicated to fighting the illicit flow of small arms and light weapons and tackling their multifaceted effects, which are a threat to international peace and security. The Group reiterates its commitment to the implementation of the Programme of Action and welcomed the successful outcome of the Ninth Conference of States Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty, which took place in Geneva, Switzerland this year. The Group urges the States parties to implement it in a balanced and objective manner, given the fact that it protects the interests of all States, not just the major international arms-producing and -exporting States.

The Group recognizes the extensive work done to address the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, including through the Bamako Declaration, the African Union Constitutive Act, the Protocol on the Establishment of the African Union Peace and Security Council and other instruments such as the Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons, Their Ammunition and Other Related Materials of the Economic Community of West African States, along with the efforts made in the framework of the Southern African Development Community and the Arab Maghreb Union. The African Group acknowledges the efforts made by the States parties to the Arms Trade Treaty since its entry into force and urges the States parties to the Treaty to implement it in a balanced and objective manner that protects the interests of all States. We reaffirm the sovereign right of States to acquire, manufacture, export, import and retain conventional arms, their parts and components for their security needs, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations. The full implementation of the Treaty remains achievable with the cooperation of all stakeholders.

Africa continues to be one of the regions that suffers most from the effects of the illicit trade and transfer of small arms and light weapons, most of which are produced outside the continent yet are acquired and used by unauthorized recipients and illegal armed groups within Africa. The Group therefore considers today's meeting another opportunity for the international community to renew its efforts to stem the tide of small

arms and light weapons in conflict situations in order to create an enabling environment for peace and security and socioeconomic development. It is important to acknowledge that promoting the peaceful, unfettered and inclusive participation of nations in global actions aimed at addressing the flow of illicit arms, particularly in Africa, will facilitate the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the African Union's Agenda 2063. The African Group stresses the need to establish and maintain controls over the private ownership of small arms and calls on all States to ensure that the supply of small arms and light weapons is limited solely to Governments or entities duly authorized by the Governments of recipient States. They should also implement the legal restrictions and prohibitions preventing the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. It is important to state that universal adherence to that undertaking could contribute greatly to the efforts aimed at eradicating the illicit trade in and transfer of small arms and light weapons.

The Group would like to commend the efforts and contributions of several partners and donors, while observing that international assistance to support the implementation of the Programme of Action is still not commensurate with the needs of the countries affected. The African Group therefore underlines the need for further engagement in addressing the challenges faced by Africa with regard to the impact of the illicit flow of small arms and light weapons. In that context, the Group calls on all States to fulfil their obligations with regard to reporting, technology transfers and ensuring the unhindered flow of international cooperation and assistance, as mandated by the United Nations. The Group also urges United Nations Member States, especially developed States, to increase their technical and financial assistance to developing countries in realizing the overall objectives of the Programme of Action and the International Tracing Instrument with a view to eradicating the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. The Group believes that such efforts will promote national and regional initiatives and assist efforts at the global level. The African Group also reiterates that such assistance should not be conditional on being part of the recipient State's official development assistance or detract from it. To that end, the adequate provision of training and equipment, technology transfers, the strengthening of national capacity-building and the mobilization of financial resources constitutes a particularly important aspect of international assistance and cooperation. In

addition, the establishment of mechanisms to increase the effectiveness of international assistance and cooperation remains a critical aspect of the process of the implementation of the Programme of Action and the International Tracing Instrument.

In conclusion, the Group wishes to reiterate its strong support for the establishment of a United Nations fellowship programme on small arms and light weapons for developing countries to train relevant officials nominated by their respective Governments in areas related to the implementation of the Programme of Action. We call on all Member States to expedite the implementation of the fellowship programme after considering the various proposals submitted by the Secretariat in that regard.

Mr. Alqaisi (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, and on behalf of the Group of Arab States, I would like to once again express in the strongest terms our condemnation and denunciation of Israel's continued aggression against our people in the Gaza Strip. We stress that the crimes committed by the Israeli occupation army cannot be met with silence, and that Israel must immediately cease its brutal aggression against Gaza. We want to warn everyone that this heinous war could drag the region to a grave disaster. We reiterate the importance of ensuring the delivery of essential humanitarian and medical assistance to the people of Gaza. We also want to remind the Committee that the forced displacement of Palestinians is a war crime that the international community must address, in line with the provisions of international law.

Turning to the topic of our discussion today, the Arab Group aligns itself with the statement just delivered by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.

The Arab Group understands the growing importance of combating the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, especially in the light of the catastrophic security, humanitarian and economic effects of those weapons and their unprecedented illegal flows in the Arab region. It seems as if some Governments are supplying terrorists and illegal armed groups with such weapons in order to prolong armed conflicts and serve their own political objectives, in violation of the most basic rules of international law, the Charter of the United Nations and the relevant Security Council resolutions, most recently resolution 2370 (2017).

In that context, the Arab Group stresses the importance of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. We call for preserving the Programme of Action's value as a consensus United Nations instrument whose main purpose is to build confidence and strengthen cooperation among the countries of the world in order to eradicate the illicit trade in such weapons. However, any measures taken in that regard must not contradict the legitimate right of States to self-defence under the Charter of the United Nations, or their right to manufacture and import conventional weapons for that purpose. The Arab Group emphasizes the need to distinguish between combating the illicit trade and supply of arms — the main objective of the Programme of Action — and the imposition of politicized, discriminatory or monopolistic restrictions on the trade in conventional arms among Governments, in accordance with their sovereign assessments of the security threats they face. The Arab Group calls for banning any export of arms to a country without an official authorization from the relevant authority of the importing country. We reaffirm the legitimate right of States to provide for their conventional-weapon needs in accordance with Article 51 of the Charter, on the legitimate right to self-defence, and we categorically reject the imposition of any restrictions on that right.

The Arab Group maintains its belief that the Programme of Action is a stand-alone international framework. We stress the need to ensure that its implementation does not overlap with any other international mechanisms. We should avoid the inclusion of any controversial topics that are not part of the Programme of Action. The Arab Group looks forward to successfully convening the fourth Review Conference of the Programme of Action, expected to take place in 2024. We reaffirm the importance of strengthening international cooperation and technical assistance for the implementation of the Programme of Action and the International Tracing Instrument, including by providing capacity-building support for States in relevant modern technologies, especially in the areas of stockpile security and border control, without interfering with the sovereignty of States or imposing conditions that contradict the spirit and objectives of the Programme of Action.

The Arab Group believes that the provision of assistance to a country should not lead to a reduction in the official development assistance resources allocated to that country, and that there should be no unspecified links between the provision of that required assistance in the area of combating the illicit trafficking and supply of conventional weapons and the implementation of target 16.4 of the Sustainable Development Goals, which specifically addresses the fight against illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons.

The Arab Group welcomed the adoption of the final document of the Eighth Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action and looks forward to building on its recommendations in preparation for the fourth Review Conference of the Programme of Action in 2024. The Arab Group also looks forward to the swift development in 2024 of a proposal for a United Nations fellowship programme aimed at capacity-building for developing countries in relation to small arms and light weapons, in line with the recommendations contained in that final document.

In conclusion, the Arab Group welcomes the conclusion of the work of the Open-ended Working Group to Elaborate a Set of Political Commitments as a New Global Framework that Will Address Existing Gaps in Through-life Ammunition Management. In that regard, the Group emphasizes the need to commit to refraining from raising any controversial issues in the proposed framework in order to ensure its effective implementation. The Group hopes that the adopted fellowship programme can be quickly and comprehensively activated.

The Chair: We have exhausted the time available for this meeting. The next meeting of the Committee will be held on Monday morning in this conference room, when the Committee will first hear a briefing by the Chair of the Open-ended Working Group to Elaborate a Set of Political Commitments as a New Global Framework that Will Address Existing Gaps in Through-life Ammunition Management. Thereafter, the Committee will continue its thematic discussion under the cluster "Conventional weapons".

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.