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First Committee

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Official Records

Chair: Mr. Dabbashi (Libya)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda items 89 to 107 (continued)

General debate on all disarmament and related international security agenda items

The Chair (*spoke in Arabic*): Before we proceed with our work, I would like to take this opportunity to give a very warm welcome on behalf of all delegations to the participants in the 2013 United Nations Disarmament Fellowship Programme, who are attending First Committee meetings this year as part of their training. They are sitting at the back of the Conference Room, and I encourage the members of the First Committee to acknowledge them when seeing them and when delivering their statements.

Mr. AlHakim (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me to join others who spoke in previous meetings to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the Chair of the First Committee. I am confident that, thanks to your expertise, our meetings will be a success.

My delegation would like to support the statements made by the representatives of Indonesia and Bahrain on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and the Arab Group, respectively (see A/C.1/68/PV.3).

The higher values of multilateralism strengthen the credibility of the collective responsibility of the international community in the sphere of the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. At a time when my Government is reaffirming its commitment to those principles, we are striving to

ensure that Iraq will be a source of, and a factor for, stability in the region and on the international stage, thus avoiding any tension and instability worldwide. I would like to reaffirm, through you, Sir, Iraq's commitment to respecting international treaties and conventions pertaining to disarmament and non-proliferation.

As stipulated in the Constitution of Iraq, Iraq attaches the utmost importance to the matter of complete and total global disarmament, based on our understanding that the arms race will not make it possible to fully and peacefully settle international problems; quite the contrary, it represents a source of instability and tension. Iraq's commitment to the treaties and conventions on non-proliferation and disarmament is based on our belief that universal adherence to international instruments on disarmament is crucial. The full dismantlement of such weapons is one of the pillars, even one of the guarantees, available to the international community against the use of such weapons or the threat of their use. Such a step would also contribute to ensuring international peace and security by seeking practical, shared, common solutions through negotiation in a multilateral context.

For those reasons, Iraq has acceded to the main disarmament instruments and reaffirms its commitment to implement their provisions fully. Among those instruments are the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological Weapons Convention. We acceded to the NPT in 1969, as well as to the additional protocol to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) comprehensive safeguards regime, the

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Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism and the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, and we support the Convention on Cluster Munitions.

Many countries share Iraq's position on the need to ensure that nuclear disarmament remains an absolute priority for the Conference on Disarmament, as reflected in the Final Document of the first special session devoted to disarmament (resolution S-10/2), held in 1978, as well as in the 1996 advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the *Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons* (see A/51/218), which affirmed that the use of nuclear weapons or the threat of their use contravened international law with respect to armed conflict. The opinion also states that Member States must negotiate in good faith in order to bring about global nuclear disarmament in the context of effective, rigorous international controls. We affirm that nuclear disarmament must remain at the heart of our priorities. The devastating nature of such weapons makes their eradication a necessity for the survival of humankind. Their very existence is a source of danger that threatens international peace and security.

My country urges nuclear-weapon States to assume their responsibilities by promptly respecting the principles of article VI of the NPT, by implementing that article to the letter, and by fully respecting the commitments made under the 1995 and 2000 Review Conferences. I would also like to use this opportunity to reaffirm the inalienable right of States, in particular developing States, to develop, produce and use nuclear technology for peaceful purposes in order to achieve unimpeded economic growth free from obstacles or discrimination, so long as those activities are subject to the controls of the IAEA and meet the requirements of the non-proliferation regime.

Despite the positive developments we have recently witnessed on the international stage, the existence and persistence of large nuclear-weapon arsenals and the development of new weapons and new means of delivery remain grounds for concern. It is therefore necessary to reach agreement on a binding instrument that provides non-nuclear-weapon States with unconditional guarantees that such weapons will not be used against them nor will threats be made of their use. Such an instrument should also define the principles that will allow for progress towards the desired goals.

Although peaceful guarantees represent an essential component on that path and despite the fact

that such a demand on the part of the non-nuclear States is fair and credible, we have voluntarily refrained from the acquisition of nuclear weapons by acceding to the relevant treaties. Nonetheless, that should not stand in the way of the final objective, which is total and complete nuclear disarmament.

Iraq reaffirms its support for the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones as a centre piece in the eradication of nuclear weapons. We call upon the international community to implement the 1995 resolution to examine and review the NPT and its extension, as well as to implement the programme of work set out in the outcome document of the 2010 Review Conference, which is an essential link in that regard, as well to implement resolution 487 (1981).

Security and stability in the Middle East require the complete elimination of weapons of mass destruction, first and foremost nuclear weapons, pursuant to paragraph 14 of Security Council resolution 687 (1991), as well as the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly that are adopted annually by consensus and the resolutions adopted by the General Conference of the IAEA.

The failure of international efforts to organize a conference on the Middle East on establishing a zone free of nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction, which was to be held in Helsinki in December 2012, is an attempt to elude the obligations stipulated in the final document of the 2010 Review Conference. That will have negative fallout on the credibility of the NPT, for the review process of the Treaty and for the nuclear non-proliferation regime generally. Moreover, the postponement sine die of the conference, based on unacceptable excuses, is the responsibility of the United Nations and the States organizing the conference.

Iraq wishes to express its satisfaction with regard to the adoption by the General Assembly, in April, of the Arms Trade Treaty, as well as its opening for signature, last June. It is a binding legal instrument that will regulate the trade in conventional weapons worldwide. In that connection, the concerns and requirements of all Member States should be taken into account, in keeping with the Charter and the principles of international law.

The Conference on Disarmament, as the sole multilateral forum on disarmament, has experienced a number of successes in the past. Now, unfortunately, it has reached a key watershed as a result of the proliferation of regional crises, terrorist threats and

risks that weapons of mass destruction will be acquired. The Conference has failed for 17 years now to bring about disarmament, and it is therefore essential that we intensify our efforts to establish a programme of work that is balanced and comprehensive and meets the concerns of all Member States — one that will make it possible to achieve progress on the other issues. We also wish to express the hope that the States members of the Conference on Disarmament will be able to reach agreement on a programme of work for the 2014 session, so as to move forward and meet our shared goals in the field of disarmament, in particular nuclear disarmament, to the benefit of international peace and security.

I wish to draw attention to the efforts that we made under the Iraqi presidency of the Conference, which led, *inter alia*, to the adoption of decision CD/1956/Rev.1, on 16 August, on the establishment of an informal working group on the programme of work of the Conference.

To conclude, I would like to wish you, Mr. Chair, and the First Committee the greatest success for the achievement of our shared goals. We would like to see an agreement among all Member States on the principal matters. You know, Sir, that you can count on Iraq's support to that end.

Mr. Mikhnevich (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): Problems of international security, non-proliferation and arms control, as discussed by the First Committee, have traditionally been of priority importance for our delegation and our country. Recent events in Syria have demonstrated the importance of further strengthening the global regime on the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs). The use of chemical weapons cannot be justified, and those responsible for that crime must be held accountable. In that context, we welcome the agreement of 14 September on the destruction of Syrian chemical weapons, as well as Security Council resolution 2118 (2013), on Syria, which not only addresses the elimination of Syrian chemical weapons but also establishes a foundation for a peaceful settlement of the Syrian crisis.

All of the foregoing is a strong indication that there is no alternative to a political and diplomatic solution to the conflict in that country, nor can there be. Any military intervention will lead only to an escalation of the conflict and threaten the territorial integrity and sovereignty of that State.

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) remains one of the fundamental elements of the international security and strategic stability system. Less than two years remain before the next scheduled NPT Review Conference. I call upon all States parties to the Treaty to make every effort to implement the 2010 Review Conference Plan of Action. It is important that all pillars of the Treaty — disarmament, non-proliferation and the peaceful use of nuclear energy — be given due consideration.

Belarus is a consistent supporter and active participant in the process of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. This year marks 20 years since our country acceded to the NPT as a non-nuclear-weapon State. In July 1993, Belarus became the first State to voluntarily and without any preconditions give up the opportunity to possess nuclear weapons left following the collapse of the Soviet Union. The withdrawal of nuclear weapons from Belarus was completed in November 1996.

Unfortunately, the process of the complete renunciation of nuclear weapons and the creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones, which the international community welcomed in a number of countries in the 1990s, has not been continued in the new millennium. Furthermore, the process for the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, which is a realistic approach to the process of nuclear disarmament, is frozen. Moreover, some States are seeking to develop their military nuclear programmes and to modernize their nuclear weapons and their means of delivery. We are convinced that the renunciation of nuclear weapons does not weaken, but rather strengthens, sovereignty and territorial integrity and expands opportunities for economic development. The examples of Belarus, Kazakhstan and Ukraine should encourage such convictions in other countries.

Today, Belarus, together with the Missions of Kazakhstan and Ukraine and with the assistance of the Reaching Critical Will organization, will organize, in Conference Room 3, a panel discussion on the theme “Twenty years of renunciation of nuclear weapons by Belarus, Kazakhstan and Ukraine: lessons learned and prospects of nuclear disarmament”. The purpose of the event is to once again draw attention to the historic importance of political decisions adopted in the early 1990s that have stimulated the process of nuclear

disarmament and have substantially strengthened international security as a whole.

In that regard, I must touch upon the issue of the non-proliferation of WMDs and their means of delivery. That topic is directly related to issues of export control and preventing WMD materials from falling into the hands of terrorists and terrorist organizations, as well as other criminals. In that regard, Belarus supports efforts to implement Security Council resolution 1540 (2004), which provides for an integrated and comprehensive approach to combat the spread of WMDs.

Our national framework document — a road map for additional measures regarding the implementation of resolution 1540 (2004) — was prepared by Belarus last year and serves as an effective tool to enhance the implementation of the resolution. We are ready to cooperate in the broadest manner possible, both in terms of the resolution itself and in terms of our implementation of the framework document.

WMD proliferation issues are in line with the goal of the international community to prevent the uncontrolled spread of conventional weapons.

The Arms Trade Treaty, which the General Assembly adopted as resolution 67/234 B, is a step in the right direction. Unfortunately, however, it does not fully meet its primary task of preventing the illicit trafficking in conventional weapons. The effectiveness of that international instrument will largely depend, first and foremost, on the participation of the largest arms exporters and importers and on the adoption of specific measures to prevent the illicit trafficking in weapons, as well as on the establishment of strong national export-control systems in countries where such systems are not yet available. Based on those factors, we will consider our options to join that international legal instrument.

Mrs. Nusseibeh (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): It is an honour for me to deliver my first statement as the Permanent Representative of the United Arab Emirates to the United Nations. I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere congratulations to you, Sir, on your election as Chair of the First Committee at its sixty-eighth session. I have full confidence in your ability to guide the work of the Committee successfully, and I can assure you, Sir, of my delegation's full cooperation. I would also like to thank your predecessor, the Permanent Representative of Indonesia, for his good efforts.

My delegation would like to endorse the statements made on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and the League of Arab States (see A/C.1/68/PV.3) with regard to the agenda items before the Committee.

The United Arab Emirates has pursued a steady national policy and has a clear position on disarmament and non-proliferation issues, based on its firm belief in the importance of accession to, and the full implementation of, all international conventions concluded in that regard. Accordingly, the United Arab Emirates acceded to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) in 1995, ratified the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) in 2000, signed its Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in 2003, ratified its Additional Protocol thereto in 2010, and recently signed the Arms Trade Treaty. Based on that position, the United Arab Emirates expresses its concern about the lack of progress made by the international community in the areas of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, which could undermine international peace and security efforts.

With regard to nuclear disarmament, we renew our call for that obligation to be taken seriously. We express our concern about the inability of the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva to achieve any results, despite its having been established many years ago. A solution to that obstacle must be found, in particular one that enables the negotiation process for concluding a fissile material cut-off treaty to begin.

The United Arab Emirates is deeply concerned about the nuclear test conducted by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea earlier this year, which constitutes a clear threat to regional and international peace and security and is another indication of the importance of the entry into force of the CTBT. We therefore call upon the annex 2 States to sign and ratify the Treaty in order to ensure its entry into force as soon as possible.

The United Arab Emirates attaches special importance to the Non-Proliferation Treaty, as it is the cornerstone of the non-proliferation regime and nuclear disarmament, and to the IAEA comprehensive safeguards regime, in particular its additional protocol, which is a key instrument for verifying the non-proliferation regime and providing reliable assurances that all nuclear materials and facilities are being used for peaceful purposes.

In that context, I would like to affirm my country's firm position, which is that all States must fully implement their obligations relating to the safeguards regime and any other relevant international commitments. In that connection, my delegation expresses its continued concern about the challenges facing the non-proliferation regime, especially the inability of the International Atomic Energy Agency to fully verify the peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear activities. We call upon Iran to resolve all outstanding issues with the IAEA in order to restore confidence in the peaceful nature of its nuclear programme and exclude any possible military objectives.

With regard to the Middle East, we express our disappointment over the failure to convene the 2012 conference called for in the Final Document of the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. We call upon the organizers to convene the conference as soon as possible in order to maintain the credibility of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. We also call upon Israel to join the NPT, since it is the only State in the region that has not acceded to it yet. We also urge all States in the region to work constructively towards achieving the objective of the establishment of the Middle East as a region free of nuclear weapons.

The United Arab Emirates supports international efforts aimed at strengthening nuclear security, especially in the light of the potential escalating threats of nuclear terrorism. We welcome the outcomes of the ministerial conference on nuclear security recently held at the IAEA. I also would like to point out the continued engagement of the United Arab Emirates in such international efforts, particularly through its participation in the 2010 Nuclear Security Summit in Washington, D.C., and the 2012 Seoul Nuclear Security Summit. In line with those efforts, the United Arab Emirates will host from 27 to 31 October in Abu Dhabi the IAEA International Conference on the Safety and Security of Radioactive Sources.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize the importance of, and the need for, the international community to promptly reach consensus on moving the work of the Committee forward in order to ensure the advancement of regional and international peace and security.

Mr. Haddad (Lebanon) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to begin by congratulating you, Sir, and the other members of the Bureau on your and their elections the

Chair and Bureau of the First Committee, respectively, for the sixty-eighth session of the General Assembly. I would also like to thank your predecessor and those who served on the outgoing Bureau.

My delegation supports the statements made by the representatives of Indonesia and Bahrain on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and the Group of Arab States, respectively (see A/C.1/68/PV.3).

At a time when the international community is working together to identify the guidelines for the review of the post-2015 development goals, take a new look at policies and re-establish priorities, we must necessarily stop to take a look at the alarming figures regarding armaments in the world and to take stock of the commitments and promises enshrined in Article 26 of the Charter of the United Nations, which calls for efforts to ensure and strengthen international peace and security by greatly limiting the material and other resources earmarked for armaments. Lebanon reaffirms that international peace and security are possible only with political will and determination — political will to reduce armaments and weapons of mass destruction (WMDs), nuclear weapons in particular.

Lebanon believes that WMDs — and we would include chemical weapons, of course — are the Damocles sword hanging over international peace and security. We therefore strongly condemn the use of such weapons and reiterate that only collective efforts, through the United Nations and specialized bodies, can put an end to the adverse threats and impacts of those weapons. Nuclear weapons continue to be the most dangerous thing that human beings have invented in our era. Of course, while they may represent an intellectual discovery, they also present a moral failure that endangers all humankind and all civilizations.

From here in the First Committee, Lebanon calls for the implementation of resolution 50/66, on the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East, within the framework of a global and regional integrated vision free of double standards. We remind delegations again of the crucial need to convene the conference on that subject as quickly as possible, with the participation of all concerned parties. In that context, we recall that Israel is the only State in the region that has not acceded to the NPT. Lebanon therefore calls upon the international community to bring pressure to bear on Israel to ensure that it brings its nuclear sites under the IAEA comprehensive safeguards regime. The complete

elimination of nuclear weapons continues to be the only safeguard against the use of those weapons or the threat of their use — the only safeguard for ensuring security, lasting stability and a just and comprehensive peace in the region and the world.

Lebanon reaffirms the right of States, as enshrined in the NPT, to develop nuclear research in the areas of the production and use of peaceful nuclear energy. We feel that integrating the human aspect of nuclear energy has become critical. In that connection, we are pleased to note international efforts to raise awareness and find the necessary comprehensive and appropriate solutions to ensure that scientific developments do not undermine general safety and security.

Lebanon, while reiterating States' rights to self-defence, as stipulated by the Charter of the United Nations, and thus to acquire weapons and to produce them and export them, is pleased with the adoption of the Arms Trade Treaty. We hope that it will bolster international oversight over arms flows and help prohibit their use for criminal terrorist ends and organized crime. Our country also hopes that such efforts will lead to an accountability mechanism in cases where States do not comply with United Nations resolutions.

Lebanon believes that the United Nations disarmament machinery is the most representative and comprehensive platform for exchanging points of view and building confidence. We would therefore call for strengthening the role of the Conference on Disarmament and for ensuring that it can carry out the noble objectives for which it was established.

Lebanon urges the international community to scale up its efforts and work together to rid the world of nuclear weapons and WMDs. We are speaking from bitter personal experience, given the continuing Israeli threat to our land, air and water. Lebanon has continued to suffer from repeated attacks by Israel on its territory, facilities and infrastructure through lethal and prohibited weapons — weapons that continue to claim innocent Lebanese victims.

In conclusion, Sir, I would like to wish you every success and to reaffirm my delegation's support for you and the Bureau. We will participate in the negotiations in order to ensure the best results.

Mr. Maope (Lesotho): I would like to congratulate you, Sir, and the other members of the Bureau on your

elections. I can assure you of our delegation's full support.

I wish to align myself with the statements delivered by the representatives of Iran and Nigeria on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and the African Group, respectively (see A/C.1/68/PV.3).

As peace-loving nations we came together, in the words of the Preamble to the Charter of the United Nations,

“to practice tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbours, and to unite our strength to maintain international peace and security”.

However, our goal of making the world a safe and secure place, where humankind can live without fear of annihilation through the use of nuclear weapons or other weapons of mass destruction, continues to elude us. There are simply too many threats to peace in existence today. Terrorism and inter- and intra-State conflicts are the order of the day. Illicit trafficking in conventional weapons, including small arms and light weapons, also poses a serious threat to world peace. Some countries possess nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction. The real issue that we have to tackle is how to move forward in pursuit of our ideal — increasing human security through general and complete disarmament without diminishing the security of any State.

For us in the developing world, conventional weapons, including small arms and light weapons, are responsible for the loss of life on a daily basis. 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 its International Tracing Instrument are important global mechanisms with the potential for curbing the illicit manufacture, transfer and circulation of small arms and light weapons, as well as their excessive accumulation and uncontrolled spread in many regions of the world. It is, however, common knowledge that the implementation of the Programme of Action on Small Arms has not been as successful as we had hoped. The fact that it is not legally binding presents a challenge in implementing the Programme. It is my delegation's hope that the issue will be given serious attention at the Review Conference in 2018. Moreover, the lack of predictable funding for implementing the Programme is another big impediment, and we call on

our development partners for increased international cooperation and funding for it.

It was inspiring that, after many years of negotiations, the international community resolved that it was time to regulate the global trade in conventional weapons by adopting the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), on 2 April. It is even more encouraging to note that more than 113 Member States have signed the Treaty since it was first opened for signature, on 3 June. I am proud to announce that my country, Lesotho, is among them. We shall shortly embark on the path to ratifying the instrument. We encourage others to consider acceding to the Treaty without further delay in order that it may soon enter into force. It is our hope that the ATT will level the playing field for international arms transfers by requiring all States to abide by a set of standards for transfer controls.

We derive no comfort from the fact that some States possess weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons, in large quantities, under the pretext of needing them for deterrence. The devastating humanitarian consequences of such weapons are known to all. History has revealed that the theory of deterrence is counterproductive. It invites only endless arms races and increases the threat of proliferation. The possession of nuclear weapons has not proved a source of security and stability. We therefore call on the nuclear-weapon States to abide by their obligations under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), not only by renouncing their nuclear arsenals but by destroying them in a verifiable manner. It is equally important that States outside the NPT consider acceding to it as non-nuclear-weapon States.

There is no question that it is crucial that we focus our attention on strengthening the NPT, which is the cornerstone of the world's nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament regime. The three pillars of the NPT, namely, disarmament, non-proliferation and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, must be implemented in a balanced manner. Efforts to erode the Treaty's credibility must be thwarted. In that context, we feel compelled to register our concern about the lack of progress in establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. The fact that a conference on establishing such a zone was not held last year, as proposed by the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, is a major setback. We appeal to the conveners to do all it takes to ensure that a conference

is held as soon as possible. It must be remembered that the conference is not an end in itself; the objective is ultimately to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, which will enhance not just regional security, but also security worldwide.

By the same token, we encourage the nuclear-weapon States to ratify the nuclear-weapon-free zone treaties and their relevant protocols, and to cooperate in achieving the entry into force of the legally binding protocols of all those treaties. In that regard, we hope that ratification of the Treaty of Pelindaba by the remaining nuclear-weapon States will become a reality in the fullness of time. Needless to say, nuclear-weapon States are under a moral obligation to provide legally binding negative security assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States on the use of such weapons.

The agreement reached on eliminating Syria's chemical weapons speaks to what the international community can achieve through effective diplomacy. We welcome Security Council resolution 2118 (2013), which establishes a framework for eliminating Syria's chemical weapons, and we are encouraged by Syria's decision to agree to the total destruction of its chemical weapons and to accede to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction. We can only hope that other countries that possess such weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons, will renounce them and join the consensus to have a safe and secure world.

A major lesson that must be learned from the use of chemical weapons in Syria is that there is no absolute guarantee that weapons of mass destruction will never be used, intentionally or accidentally, by States or non-State actors, including terrorists. Let us build on the momentum generated by the High-level Meeting on Nuclear Disarmament (see A/68/PV.11) held on 26 September and rid the world of weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons.

The impasse in the United Nations disarmament machinery, in particular the Conference on Disarmament (CD), distorts the main purpose for which the United Nations was created. It is time that States members of the CD stop focusing on narrow individual security interests and make progress on the issues before them. As the single multilateral disarmament negotiation forum, the CD's importance is beyond dispute.

To conclude, all that needs to be said on disarmament and non-proliferation has been said already. Every year we reiterate our well-known positions on disarmament and non-proliferation — both in this Committee and elsewhere within the United Nations disarmament machinery. Yet consensus is difficult to achieve and progress is slow in the implementation of the decisions taken. It is time to translate our rhetoric into action. With the necessary political will, we can make meaningful progress.

Mr. Back (Australia): May I first congratulate you, Sir, on your election as Chair of the First Committee during its sixty-eighth session. Australia is pleased to see you chairing this important Committee. You can be assured of the Australian delegation's strong support.

Australia gives top priority to taking forward the non-proliferation and disarmament agenda. We are ready and willing to contribute in an innovative manner to ensuring that the United Nations does not falter in realizing its ambition for a more peaceful, stable and secure world, not just for ourselves but for future generations, and to hasten the day when humankind need no longer to live under the threat of violence, whether caused by war, conflict or terrorism. In that spirit and among the many topics worthy of our attention, I will focus my comments today on some priority areas that warrant our concerted action.

Events this year have graphically highlighted why we all harbour deep concern over the threat posed to global and regional peace and security by weapons of mass destruction. Australia has condemned in the strongest possible terms the use of chemical weapons in Syria, including the attack in the Damascus suburbs on 21 August, which killed many hundreds of people, including children. The attack was a shocking violation of the long-established prohibition against the use of chemical weapons, and it is imperative that those who committed that grave breach of international law be brought to justice.

With that in mind, Australia co-sponsored and welcomed the adoption by the Security Council of resolution 2118 (2013) and the decision on the destruction of Syria's chemical weapons taken by the Executive Council of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). Those texts strengthen a fundamental norm of international relations, namely, that the use of chemical weapons by anyone in any circumstances is abhorrent to humankind and constitutes a serious breach of international law.

For the first time, the Council determined that the use of chemical weapons anywhere constituted a threat to international peace and security. Australia fully supports the full and prompt implementation of those measures as mandated by the Council.

We commend the United Nations and the OPCW for their early efforts to ensure implementation. They are carrying out their tasks under the most difficult circumstances and require full, strong support from the international community as they do so. We call on the Syrian authorities to cooperate unconditionally with the United Nations and the OPCW to ensure the complete, final, verifiable and enforceable destruction of Syria's chemical weapons and all related materials and equipment.

The past 12 months have been particularly productive in advancing global action on conventional weapons control, with, inter alia, the General Assembly's adoption, on 2 April, of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), of which Australia was an author, by an overwhelming majority of States. The Security Council's adoption, on 26 September, of resolution 2117 (2013), which was put forward by Australia to strengthen international action to combat the illicit trade and misuse of small arms and light weapons, was also a major milestone.

Australia is honoured to have played a part in developing those initiatives. It was also among the early signatories of the Arms Trade Treaty and, in our capacity as Council President for the month of September, of advancing the resolution on small arms and light weapons (resolution 2117 (2013)). Now that the ATT has been opened for signature, the international community must continue to maintain the momentum behind the Treaty so as to achieve its earliest entry into force and effective implementation. At this session of the First Committee, Australia, together with the other ATT co-authors — Argentina, Costa Rica, Finland, Japan, Kenya and the United Kingdom — will present a draft resolution that urges further signatures and ratifications of the Treaty and its early entry into force.

We invite all Member States to support the draft resolution, which also calls on States in a position to do so to provide assistance to requesting States intending to become parties to the Treaty. Australia encourages States wishing to assist with the implementation of the ATT to contribute to the United Nations Trust Facility Supporting Cooperation on Arms Regulation. The Facility will also provide a vehicle for assisting States to implement the United Nations Programme of Action

to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects.

Australia encourages continued momentum on the universalization of the Convention on Cluster Munitions and the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention. Recognizing the tragic impact on civilians of cluster munitions and anti-personnel mines, Australia urges the continued harnessing of national and international assistance and cooperation and the further promotion of universalization and full and effective implementation. We also look forward to the third Review Conference on the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, to be held in Maputo in 2014, which will build upon progress made to date towards achieving a world free of landmines.

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is the cornerstone of the non-proliferation and disarmament regime. We must continue to reaffirm our support for the norms established by the Treaty. We must take credible steps to address the fact that nuclear weapons still exist 68 years after their only use in war. And we must acknowledge that progress on nuclear disarmament most readily occurs in an atmosphere of trust conducive to building the political will to turn away from nuclear weapons.

Nuclear disarmament expectations fall most heavily on the nuclear-weapon States. Australia welcomes the continued engagement of the nuclear-weapon States to make progress in implementing their disarmament commitments made or reaffirmed in 2010. Reporting nuclear disarmament progress remains a particular challenge. A stronger culture of transparency and accountability is crucial. To that end, Australia and other members of the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative have sought to engage the nuclear-weapon States on transparency and reporting.

There are clearly gaps in the global nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament regime; we acknowledge them, and much of our effort is aimed at addressing them. But that also means that regional initiatives are a crucial complementary focus; they can strengthen global efforts, but they can also address specific regional concerns and insecurities. Nowhere is that more relevant and urgent than in the Middle East. Australia strongly supports the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction, as well as the ongoing efforts to convene a conference at the earliest opportunity. We call on all States in the Middle East

to engage, in a spirit of genuine and constructive cooperation, to make that happen.

The entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) remains a priority. The nuclear test moratorium should be strengthened so as to prevent it slipping back into a time of nuclear testing. The CTBT is more than a practical commitment not to test nuclear weapons; it is also symbolic of a broader undertaking to prevent their further development. Australia calls on nuclear-weapon possessors and other annex 2 countries that have not yet ratified the Treaty to do so.

The discussions at the Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons, held in Oslo this year, in which Australia participated, illustrated once more the devastating, immediate and long-term humanitarian effects of a nuclear-weapon detonation. That is why we must strive to realize the goal of a world without nuclear weapons, including through the implementation of the Action Plan of the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

In the meantime, we must bring to a halt any additions to nuclear weapons, and indeed reverse the trend and reduce their quantity. The need for a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices has long been recognized by the General Assembly, and a start to negotiations is seriously overdue. In that connection, the Conference on Disarmament must get back to work. Australia has been doing its part to break the impasse through participation in the open-ended working group on taking forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations.

New security challenges are arising ahead of us, for example in cyberspace. We welcome the consensus report of the Group of Governmental Experts on Developments in the Field of Information and Telecommunications in the Context of International Security (see A/68/98), which Australia was honoured to chair. The Group's recommendation on the standards, rules and principles of responsible behaviour by States and the fact that international law, in particular the Charter of the United Nations, is applicable, is an important breakthrough. It provides a fundamental principle on which to build a process for formulating rules applying to States' behaviour in cyberspace.

The challenges we face do not remain static. Once considered an emerging issue, space security is now

squarely on the international security agenda. The consensus report of the Group of Governmental Experts on Transparency and Confidence-Building Measures in Outer Space Activities (see A/68/189) outlines how closer coordination and consultation among States can reduce misperceptions and miscalculations in space. Such measures, along with the reaffirmation by the Group of Governmental Experts of the existing legal framework pertaining to outer space, will contribute to building trust among space actors and users alike. To that end, Australia welcomes the European Union's continuing efforts to engage the international community in the preparation of a draft of an international code of conduct.

The thematic discussions over the coming weeks will provide an opportunity for us all to engage substantively so as to take the disarmament and non-proliferation agenda forward. Under your leadership, Sir, I hope that our collective focus will be on practical outcomes for the benefit of the international community but, most important, of humankind.

Mr. Ruiz Blanco (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of my delegation, Sir, I would like to warmly congratulate you and the other members of the Bureau on your election. I am sure that your dedication and experience will enable us to work substantively and effectively to advance the process of revitalizing what is known as our disarmament machinery.

As I come before the First Committee, I am both anxious and eager, while conscious of the unavoidable, even enormous, challenges, whatever their characteristics or their destructive power, that the phenomena that are the reasons for the existence of the issues of disarmament and non-proliferation pose for humankind. I am anxious because of the many unfinished tasks in this area, which will not be resolved without the decisive commitment of all the States that make up our community of nations and that have the potential, here, in this room, to hold a dialogue and to act. I am eager because there is not one of our Governments that does not understand that disarmament is not just a challenge, it is a fundamental obligation for every State, and that the means to achieve our goals are understanding and agreement.

My country considers it crucial to regulate the trade in conventional weapons and improve the mechanisms for controlling illicit trafficking in such weapons. I am therefore pleased to announce that, on 24 September, on the sidelines of the general debate in the General

Assembly, the President of the Republic of Colombia, Juan Manuel Santos Calderón, signed the Arms Trade Treaty, as an indication of our strong commitment to the spirit of a Treaty that, as the first legally binding agreement establishing shared international standards governing the transfer of conventional weapons, is a milestone in the regulation of the arms trade. I would like to emphasize that the Treaty's entry into force will contribute to world peace, security and stability. Anything that can be done to reduce human suffering and promote cooperation, transparency and responsible action on the part of States should be encouraged. When that Treaty enters into force, it will be easier to prevent such crimes as the diversion of and illicit trafficking in arms to unauthorized persons, such as terrorist groups and criminal gangs and organizations, all of which have an impact on many countries, including Colombia. I would therefore like to reiterate our strong commitment to the Treaty's early entry into force and its effective implementation.

At the same time, given the fact that the lack of regulation of conventional arms, especially small arms and light weapons, ammunition and explosives, is only just beginning to be remedied, it is essential that we redouble efforts to strengthen the major treaties of the disarmament regime. For developing countries, which are the most affected by the proliferation of conventional weapons, strengthening our disarmament instruments is not only an ethical issue but also a matter of survival. Colombia therefore commends the adoption by consensus of the final document of the second Review Conference 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, whereby States reaffirmed the importance of the full and effective implementation of the Programme of Action in promoting peace, reconciliation, the protection of human life and sustainable development. We reiterate the importance of continuing to work on the implementation of the Programme of Action and its International Tracing Instrument.

Because of the importance that Colombia attaches to the Programme of Action, this year, in what has now become a tradition, we, together with South Africa and Japan, will present to the Committee a draft resolution on the trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects. Among other things, the draft resolution will stress how important it is that States intensify their efforts to increase their national capacities for implementing the Programme of Action. We hope

to be able, once more, to rely on every delegation's support. Furthermore, we must not lose sight of the fact that, while the risk of weapons of mass destruction is a latent one, illicit small arms and light weapons, ammunition and explosives affect citizens in every region of the world, every day. The use of such weapons is the common denominator of all kinds of criminal behaviour, including the global drug problem, extortion and terrorism. As a result, the international community must address that matter with the importance that it truly merits. With that goal in mind, given the changing nature of illicit trafficking, Colombia will continue to work with other States in an effective and cooperative manner on the global, regional and subregional levels in order to address that serious phenomenon.

Colombia supports a comprehensive approach that protects and assists the victims of all types of weapons without distinction. We are therefore working actively for the promotion and implementation of the conventions that regulate weapons that have a humanitarian impact, such as the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction and the Convention on Cluster Munitions. Those types of weapons have the same dire consequences, namely, they have a severe humanitarian impact and impede socioeconomic development.

Colombia is a State party to, and staunch supporter of, the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. In addition, I am pleased to inform the Committee that we are making progress on the necessary steps needed to become a State party to the Convention on Cluster Munitions.

My country has struggled for years against the scourge posed by anti-personnel mines. Unfortunately, we continue to be affected by anti-personnel mines and other improvised explosive devices that are used indiscriminately by illegal armed actors. Accordingly, our country has gained a significant amount of experience with regard to the various components of a comprehensive programme of action against anti-personnel mines. As we have done in the past, we shall continue to extend our cooperation in that area to other affected countries.

Together with Austria, Colombia currently presides over the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention's Standing Committee on Victim Assistance. We have decided to focus our attention on children and

adolescents who are victims of anti-personnel mines, as they are the most vulnerable sector of the population. In that regard, we organized a technical workshop in the context of the intersessional meeting of the Convention and have developed a number of guidelines for caring for such minors in order to promote international standards in that area. Furthermore, I would like to inform the Committee that Colombia will host a global conference on caring for survivors of anti-personnel mines and persons with disabilities, to be held on 3 and 4 April 2014, on the theme "Bridges between worlds". The global conference will draw on the valuable support of the European Union and of the implementation support unit of the Ottawa Convention.

Recent events have shown that the threat posed by weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery persists and that there is a clear risk of proliferation through the acquisition and use of such weapons. It is therefore the responsibility of the international community to ensure compliance with instruments such as the Biological Weapons Convention and the Chemical Weapons Convention, as well as the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and Security Council resolution 1540 (2004).

Allow me to mention in particular the Chemical Weapons Convention. Colombia is committed to strengthening the provisions of the Convention and its four basic pillars, namely, chemical disarmament, non-proliferation, assistance and protection against such weapons, and international cooperation to promote the peaceful uses of chemistry.

In that context, we welcome the deposit of the instruments of adherence to the Chemical Weapons Convention on the part of the Federal Republic of Somalia and the Syrian Arab Republic. The Convention is an exemplary instrument that, given the current situation, has gained particular relevance and enables the raising of the awareness of the international community with regard to the devastating effects of weapons of mass destruction and the urgent need to prohibit them. We are pleased to note that there are now almost 190 States parties to the Convention.

In referring to that Convention, we must also praise the work of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). In that regard, we want to express our gratitude to the OPCW for its dedicated work in Syria, and we reaffirm our full support for the mission it is currently carrying out on the ground

there and for its initiatives aimed at the prohibition of chemical weapons throughout the world.

Furthermore, Colombia highlights the need to ensure the universalization and effective implementation of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. With regard to its implementation, we advocate compliance with each of the three pillars of the NPT, that is, nuclear disarmament, nuclear non-proliferation and the promotion of the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

Colombia attaches particular relevance to the 2015 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. That will be an ideal forum to renew our commitments and adopt measures that will make an effective contribution towards the goal of a nuclear-weapon-free world.

With regard to nuclear disarmament, I would like to highlight the work of the Open-ended Working Group established under resolution 67/56, entitled "Taking forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations". In the same vein, I wish to underscore the results of the High-level Meeting on Nuclear Disarmament (see A/68/PV.11), the first such high-level event on a matter of fundamental importance. At that Meeting, our attention was drawn, *inter alia*, to deep concern with regard to the threat to humankind posed by the ongoing existence of nuclear weapons.

Pursuant to Colombia's obligations as a State party to the Biological Weapons Convention, our country presented the report on confidence-building measures in that area for the current year. The report is an appropriate mechanism to prevent and reduce ambiguities with regard to the peaceful use of biological agents or toxins. It also serves to promote international cooperation in that area. I wish to underscore that, with the aim of raising greater awareness among national institutions with regard to the provisions of the Convention, our country organized a dissemination workshop on the Convention this year. In that effort, we drew on the support of the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, the Verification Research, Training and Information Centre and the Biological Weapons Convention implementation support unit. The aim of the workshop was to evaluate existing legal provisions and other provisions to be adopted subsequently aimed at ensuring effective compliance with the Convention.

On the same occasion, we considered the possibility of establishing a national authority on biological weapons.

Furthermore, I wish to inform the Committee that, in April, Colombia submitted a proposal for future activities to be carried out in the framework of the European Union joint action in support of the Biological Weapons Convention. The objective of the proposal is to ensure continuity in the promotion and national implementation of the Convention.

In conclusion, in our capacity as a State member of the Conference on Disarmament, we wish to express our resolve to work constructively so as to ensure that the Conference can resume its essential work as a privileged forum for negotiations on disarmament and international security matters. In that connection, we welcome the fact that, on 16 August, the Conference adopted a draft decision establishing an informal group mandated to draft a robust working programme. Given that renewed impetus and the calls on member States and non-member States to lend their support, we have confidence that the Conference will be further strengthened for the benefit of all.

I reaffirm my willingness and that of my Government to work constructively to meet the objectives that have been established for the sixty-eighth session of the First Committee. We wish you, Mr. Chair, all the best in that worthy endeavour. I hope for the success of this worthwhile undertaking, and I hope that all of us, representatives of Member States, will demonstrate the sensitivity and good judgement necessary to work together for the cause of disarmament — a crucial task in achieving coexistence and the survival of humankind.

Mr. Al-Qahtani (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me first to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the Chair of the First Committee at the sixty-eighth session. I also commend the other members of the Bureau and wish them every success in carrying out their tasks. I reaffirm Qatar's readiness to fully cooperate with the Chair in ensuring that the Committee achieves a successful outcome.

Qatar associates itself with the statements made by the representative of the Kingdom of Bahrain on behalf of the Arab Group and by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/68/PV.3).

The State of Qatar reaffirms the importance of multilateralism as the best means to address

disarmament and non-proliferation matters. We express our resolve to cooperate multilaterally in strengthening international peace and security and freeing humankind from the threat posed by lethal weapons, in particular nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction.

My country welcomes the convening of the General Assembly High-level Meeting on Nuclear Disarmament on 26 September (see A/68/PV.11). We hope it will lead to the further strengthening of efforts to achieve a nuclear-weapon-free world and the adoption of an international treaty regulating the possession and use of such weapons.

Among the results of the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, we would single out the resolution containing specific measures on the implementation of the resolution adopted by the 1995 Review and Extension Conference to ensure that the Middle East becomes a nuclear-weapon-free zone that is free from all other weapons of mass destruction. That resolution is a prerequisite for the indefinite extension of the Treaty.

Among other specific measures, the Secretary-General, in coordination with the depositary States to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the States of the region, was entrusted with a mandate to reach agreement on choosing the host country to serve as facilitator, as well as on a date for convening the conference on establishing a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East. Despite the efforts of the Arab States and other States parties, that was not possible owing to a lack of resolve on the part of one country in the region that refrained from rallying to support the convening of the conference. We reiterate that the political resolve of all the countries concerned is necessary to ensure that international obligations are met and that the date, time and place of the conference can be agreed on at the earliest possible date.

Declarations and proposals made with regard to reducing the military expenditures of certain countries are insufficient as they stand. They must be translated into actions. Many countries, including developing, developed and emerging countries, have sought to reduce expenditures in other areas, including health care, education and infrastructure, without similarly reducing military expenditures.

Building a world where peace and security prevail will require the implementation of Member States' disarmament commitments, including the allocation of the necessary resources to the United Nations to enable the Organization to forge a culture of peace worldwide.

Among the other challenges in the field of disarmament, we could mention the proliferation of small arms and light weapons and the failure to address the matter professionally, as a number of States persist in manufacturing and exporting millions of small arms and light weapons free from export controls or restrictions. Qatar calls for a full commitment to and the implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and the commitment of the international community to provide its fullest support to that instrument.

Anti-personnel mines, landmines and cluster munitions, such as those deposited by Israel in southern Lebanon, which continue to kill innocent civilians, pose another concern. Qatar has therefore signed the Wellington Declaration on Cluster Munitions, which resulted from the Dublin Conference.

The State of Qatar is of the opinion that a multilateral treaty represents the only means of preventing an arms race in outer space and maintaining international peace and security. The Conference on Disarmament is the only multilateral negotiating forum on disarmament matters and thus must play a leading role in order to conclude such a multilateral treaty.

Qatar seeks the further strengthening of the NPT, including its three pillars of non-proliferation, disarmament and the peaceful use of nuclear energy. To that end, we consider it unacceptable to impede the inalienable right of States parties to acquire nuclear technology for peaceful purposes. No obstacles must impede the efforts of non-nuclear-weapon States that seek to modernize their nuclear capacities for service in peaceful purposes.

Effective measures must be adopted to further strengthen international peace and security, based on principles that include the rights of States to possess weapons for self-defence, national sovereignty and non-interference in their domestic affairs, and on the need to recall each region's characteristics and their situations in terms of security and defence matters.

We reiterate our position, in line with the position of the Arab Group, regarding the 2012 conference to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, and for such a zone to be established and for the conference to be held as soon as possible. Any delay will raise misgivings as to the genuine aspirations for establishing such a region and would further jeopardize the NPT and the non-proliferation regime.

The establishment of a world ripe for security and stability and where violence is rejected remains a distant goal, far beyond our reach, given that the majority of Member States feel that the accumulation of weapons continues to provide them safety and security, rather than turning to a culture of peace, amity and cooperation among peoples. If military force leads to geopolitical advantage, then peace should guarantee stability and economic prosperity.

Mr. Albatayneh (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me to begin by warmly congratulating you, Sir, on your election to the Chair of the First Committee during the sixty-eighth session of the General Assembly. I also congratulate the other members of the Bureau. My delegation is certain that your skill and experience will lead to laudable success in the work of the Committee.

Sir, I would also like to express our gratitude to your predecessor, the Permanent Representative of Indonesia, for his able leadership at the helm of the First Committee during the previous session. In addition, I would like to take this opportunity to thank Ms. Angela Kane, High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, as well as the members of the Bureau for their efforts.

My delegation supports the statement by the representative of the Kingdom of Bahrain on behalf of the Arab Group, as well as the statement by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (see A/C.1/68/PV.3).

Jordan's position on disarmament and non-proliferation stems from its firm belief that the peaceful settlement of conflicts is absolutely necessary. That is why we were one of the first countries to ratify the major instruments of non-proliferation and disarmament. We reiterate our commitment to those instruments and the need to make them universal. Along those lines, we call upon countries that have not yet done so to ratify them.

Jordan welcomes the convening of the General Assembly High-level Meeting on Nuclear Disarmament

(see A/PV.68/PV.11), which was held on 26 September. We hope that that will lead to complete global disarmament. To further that noble goal, Jordan calls on Member States to support the proposal to designate 26 September each year as the international day for nuclear disarmament. We urge all States to effectively and constructively participate in the informal discussions on a draft resolution on that topic, to be presented during the current session on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement. We hope that the draft resolution will garner the support of all members.

We call upon all States parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) to participate constructively and to demonstrate flexibility to overcome obstacles to guarantee the success of the preparatory negotiations for the 2015 Review Conference, so as to finally implement the Treaty and thereby ensure its credibility. We must urge States that have not yet done so to ratify the Treaty as soon as possible. In that context, we reiterate the right of States to acquire nuclear technology for peaceful ends, as provided by the NPT.

Jordan was a participant in the Nuclear Security Summit convened by President Obama in April 2010, during which His Majesty King Abdullah II stated that Jordan stood ready to cooperate with all parties to the Treaty. He also stressed the need to prevent nuclear materials from falling into irresponsible or terrorist hands. Such cooperation might take the form of an international mechanism for information exchange on the activities of illegal and reckless groups so as to stem the activities of terrorists or terrorist groups.

We would like to reiterate our support for Security Council resolution 1540 (2004). The tense situation in the Middle East — the focus of the international community — should spur us to move forward towards the creation of a zone free of nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East. The implementation of that resolution will greatly serve the goals of peace and international security and stability, particularly in the region. That is why we deplore the fact that the 2012 conference planned within the framework of the 2010 NPT Review Conference did not take place, for flimsy reasons. And that is why we call for it to be convened as swiftly as possible this year and why we reiterate our willingness to participate constructively in that effort. We also reiterate our appeal to Israel to accede to the Treaty and to place its nuclear facilities

under the comprehensive safeguards regime of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

We would warn that the conference was delayed due to preconditions placed upon it, which undermines the effectiveness of the NPT in ensuring its universal ratification. Jordan was one of the first States to ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. We call upon all States, in particular annex 2 countries that have not yet done so, to do so promptly to ensure its entry into force. In that regard, at the end of 2014 Jordan will host a simulated on-site inspection that will allow for precise research regarding nuclear testing to be conducted.

With respect to the demining and the national rehabilitation of Jordan, given the seriousness of the threat posed by improvised explosive devices and explosive remnants of war, the office responsible for activities and programmes related to the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of Anti-Personnel Mines provides aid to victims and seeks to neutralize the remnants of explosives. That agency undertakes demining efforts and conducts international awareness-raising exercises on the dangers of mines, provides assistance to victims and works to remove the remnants of war in cooperation with the Jordanian armed forces. A plan covering the period 2009-2015 is in place to oversee all of the agency's programmes and to ensure the quality of demining efforts at the regional and international levels.

In conclusion, we would like to reiterate our readiness to cooperate fully with the First Committee in achieving the success of our work.

Mr. Niyozaliev (Kyrgyzstan): First of all, let me join previous speakers in congratulating you, Sir, on your election as Chair of the First Committee. Our congratulations also go to the other members of the Bureau. We assure you of our full cooperation and support in discharging your important duty.

The issues related to disarmament and international security remain acutely urgent on our agenda. As a responsible member of the international community, Kyrgyzstan attaches the utmost importance to general and complete disarmament as a means to ensure international peace and security. The ongoing disarmament negotiations and the non-proliferation regime are among the main priorities of our foreign policy, and we stand ready to make our own contribution to those processes.

Nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation continue to be the main subject of international efforts, with the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) at its centre. We hope that, based on substantive discussions during the first and second sessions of the NPT Preparatory Committee, in Vienna and Geneva, respectively, the forthcoming third session, to be held in New York in 2014, will help set the stage for a successful Review Conference in 2015. We look forward to the reports by the States parties to the Treaty, especially to those of the nuclear-weapon States, with respect to concrete actions they have taken and plan to take to reduce all categories of nuclear weapons in a transparent and irreversible fashion.

My delegation notes with regret that the conference on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems was not convened. The conference could be a disarmament milestone and could contribute to the establishment of peace in a region of heightened tensions.

We express our great concern about the use of chemical weapons in the armed conflict in Syria. Kyrgyzstan welcomes the accession of Syria to the Chemical Weapons Convention, along with the subsequent destruction of its chemical weapons stockpiles under international supervision.

Kyrgyzstan considers the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) one of the most fundamental and effective international instruments in the field of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. Based on that view, the Kyrgyz Republic signed the CTBT in 1996, ratifying it in 2003. We attach particular importance to the expeditious ratification and entry into force of the CTBT. We join others in calling on all States to demonstrate their commitment to ending nuclear testing. We urge those States listed in annex 2, whose ratifications are necessary, to do so without further delay.

My delegation looks forward to the revitalization of the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva, which continues to make little progress in its work, thus delaying negotiations on a number of key issues — including nuclear disarmament, a fissile material cut-off treaty, the prevention of an arms race in outer space and negative security assurances. We encourage all States to demonstrate the necessary political will to ensure that the disarmament machinery can fulfil its mandate.

International safeguards and the physical protection of nuclear materials and facilities are the first line of defence against nuclear terrorism. The Kyrgyz Republic supports the efforts to implement Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) in order to address the proliferation challenges posed by non-State actors. In that regard, the Government of Kyrgyzstan, with the support of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Security Council's 1540 Committee and the Office for Disarmament Affairs, adopted a national action plan earlier this year on the implementation of resolution 1540 (2004). I would like to take this opportunity to thank those countries and organizations that have offered their assistance in the implementation of our national action plan, and we express our readiness for further cooperation in that regard.

It is well known that the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones is crucial to our goal of achieving nuclear disarmament and nonproliferation. The Kyrgyz Republic takes pride in the entry into force, in 2009, of the Central Asian nuclear-weapon-free zone. We look forward to constructive dialogue with the nuclear-weapon States on a protocol on negative security assurances, and we welcome the recent positive developments in that regard.

Kyrgyzstan attaches great importance to mitigating the environmental damage caused, now and in the past, by uranium mining and the subsequent process of nuclear-fuel production. That issue was raised at the NPT Review Conferences in 2000, 2005 and 2010. Rehabilitation and securing the safety of uranium tailings, which today total more than 8 million cubic metres on our territory, remain one of Kyrgyzstan's most acute problems. The situation is aggravated by the fact that most of the deposits are located in seismically active, mudflow- and flood-prone areas with high groundwater levels, as well-near the banks of rivers that form the basis of the Central Asian water supply. Ineffective solutions would have a negative impact on millions of people in Central Asia. In that regard, the delegation of Kyrgyzstan has submitted a draft resolution on the role of the international community in the prevention of the radiation threat in Central Asia, for consideration by the Second Committee. We call on the United Nations membership to support the draft resolution.

In conclusion, let me assure you, Mr. Chair, that my delegation stands ready to participate actively in the

work of the First Committee in order to obtain good results and achieve our common goals.

Mr. Balslev (Denmark): Let me start by congratulating you, Sir, and the other members of the Bureau upon your election. I assure you of Denmark's full cooperation and support.

Denmark aligns itself fully with the statement made by observer of the European Union (see A/C.1/68/PV.3).

While the multilateral disarmament machinery normally grinds slowly, and with few dramatic events that would warrant the attention of the world press, this year has been different. We have seen extraordinary achievements, such as the adoption of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) in the General Assembly, on 2 April, which now has 113 signatures, as well as the outstanding, fast-paced diplomacy that led to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons Executive Council's decision of 27 September and the Security Council's subsequent adoption of resolution 2118 (2013), which seeks to enforce the disarmament of Syria's chemical weapons arsenal.

We have also, however, faced some of the most blatant examples of non-compliance with long-standing obligations and, even worse, atrocious war crimes committed with weapons that we thought we had already confined to the dustbin of history. First and foremost, we have been reminded that drafting and adopting legal texts and resolutions is work only half-done. We have to focus equally on implementation and compliance. The United Nations system is challenged in that regard, and will continue to be so in the years ahead. That problem will serve as a focus for Danish diplomacy.

Allow me to dwell on three issues of particular concern to Denmark, namely, the continued stalemate in the multilateral nuclear disarmament talks, the proliferation and use of weapons of mass destruction and the regulation of the conventional arms trade.

First, Denmark shares the goal of a world totally free of nuclear weapons. We believe we can get there by a gradual, building-block approach whereby, from many angles and through an inclusive process, we agree to steadily chip away at the role, importance and legitimacy of such weapons until, in the end, there is no space left for them at all. One new such building block that we would welcome would be for the United States and Russia to start looking at reciprocal cuts in non-strategic nuclear weapons, as suggested by President Obama in his Berlin speech. But we also

need a comprehensive and dynamic framework for multilateral disarmament negotiations with the full and active participation of all nuclear-weapon States as well as non-nuclear-weapon States.

Regrettably, the Conference on Disarmament is not delivering. Hence, after more than a decade of frustration, we agreed last year on three important measures to try to create new momentum, that is, the open-ended working group, which met in Geneva from May to August; the General Assembly High-level Meeting on Nuclear Disarmament, held two weeks ago (see A/68/PV.11); and, for the coming year, the establishment of a Group of Governmental Experts to look at a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices. While we throw our full support behind the latter group, we think we can already now conclude that the open-ended working group, in particular under the able chairmanship of Ambassador Manuel B. Dengo, has been a success — not so much in reaching agreement but in conceptualizing new approaches and better defining differences that need to be bridged. We thank those who have participated constructively.

As in the past, Denmark will join in a statement to be made by the representative of New Zealand expressing deep concern over the devastating immediate and long-term humanitarian effects that could follow from the use of nuclear weapons. We are happy to see that the group of countries behind the statement has grown ever bigger. In our view, that third-track approach is complementary to existing multilateral or bilateral disarmament and non-proliferation mechanisms and is not meant to undermine them. Nor is it meant to reinterpret international humanitarian law. Our aim is to increase awareness through a fact-based discussion, and thus to add further impetus to our work.

Equally important is the work of implementing all aspects of the forward-looking work programme agreed at the 2010 Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, not the least of which was to be the convening of a conference on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. We commend the tireless work of Ambassador Jaakko Laajava and call on all countries of the region to work towards a successful conference in an open and constructive manner without preconditions.

Secondly, we must address the real proliferation threats to our collective security coming from the

Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Iran, Syria and elsewhere, including from non-State actors, for which the Security Council holds key responsibility. Denmark continues to fully support Security Council resolutions 1540 (2004) and 1887 (2009), and we insist that all countries, not least the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Iran and Syria, comply fully with all the resolutions of the Security Council, the International Atomic Energy Agency Board of Governors and other obligations under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

We stand squarely behind the laudable efforts led by European Union High Representative Catherine Ashton in the context of the E3+3 Governments to seek a diplomatic solution to the Iranian nuclear issue. We are encouraged by the more favourable atmosphere during the high-level segment, but we need deeds, not words, to go forward.

We have witnessed particularly disturbing developments in Syria with the use of chemical weapons. It casts a dark shadow on the Committee's work. The use of chemical weapons against the civilian population was confirmed, overwhelmingly, by the Sellström report. It was not part of the mandate of United Nations inspectors to blame anyone for the atrocity of 21 August, but the sheer amount of proof that exists, in addition to the report, points to the likely perpetrators. The use of chemical weapons is a war crime, and there should be no impunity.

Security Council resolution 2018 (2013), which is legally binding and enforceable, condemns the attacks and calls for the perpetrators to be held accountable for that crime. In the event that those responsible do not comply with the decision by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), the resolution also foresees a strong international reaction, in which case the Council will impose measures under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations. We are encouraged by preliminary reports from the United Nations and the OPCW on the cooperation that the Syrian regime and the opposition have shown in implementing the OPCW decision and the resolutions of the Security Council. Denmark has contributed financially to the most difficult and complicated task of removing and destroying Syria's chemical weapons. We are looking into more ways of contributing with the appropriate expertise, know-how and personnel.

While being preoccupied with the most serious chemical-weapons challenge to peace and security

in decades, we must not forget that biological agents and toxins used as weapons could potentially pose a comparable, or perhaps even a greater, risk. Denmark will continue to contribute to the common task of strengthening the security of biological weapons, reducing the risk of proliferation and improving the toolkit for the Secretary-General.

Finally, to end on a happy note, we managed to produce the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT). The jubilant culmination, in early April, of nine years of efforts and negotiations was indeed a memorable event. We commend the tremendous efforts of everyone involved, not least of Ambassadors Roberto García Moritán and Peter Woolcott. Now we must look ahead. The Treaty must be brought into force fast. We must work to make it universal. We must maintain its high standards while continuing to implement it to the greatest extent possible.

The unregulated and irresponsible international trade in arms has had devastating effects. If it is implemented properly, the Arms Trade Treaty will make a real difference to the lives of millions of people around the world. We should take steps to ensure that the costs and administrative burden of effective implementation do not discourage least developed countries, which are often the ones most affected, from joining the Treaty.

We are encouraged that the participating States of the Wassenaar Arrangement, whose plenary Denmark is chairing this year, have declared their readiness to share the Arrangement's accumulated experience and expertise with other States as they start implementing the ATT.

Already at the March conference, Denmark committed \$1.7 million to support capacity-building initiatives, particularly in the Sahel and the Horn of Africa regions. Denmark has committed about two thirds of that through the United Nations Trust Facility Supporting Cooperation on Arms Regulation, and half of that has already been disbursed. We encourage other Member States to donate generously to that important, lifesaving effort.

Mr. Ahmed (Bangladesh): I congratulate you, Mr. Chair, and the other members of the Bureau on having been elected as Chair and members of First Committee at the sixty-eighth session of the General Assembly. We look forward to a productive session under your able leadership. You can count on

Bangladesh's fullest cooperation in carrying out your responsibilities.

Bangladesh aligns itself with the statement made by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/68/PV.3). However, I would like to highlight a few points in my national capacity.

As a responsible member of the international community, Bangladesh is committed to complete disarmament, a commitment that flows from our constitutional obligation to promote disarmament. Our commitment to supporting international peace and security by participating in United Nations peacekeeping and peacebuilding efforts has been widely recognized and admired. We are also signatories to all measures and multilateral disarmament treaties, including the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the Chemical Weapons Convention, the Biological Weapons Convention, the Certain Conventional Weapons Convention and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

We are dismayed to witness a deadlock in the global United Nations-led multilateral diplomacy on disarmament. The only real hope is the Arms Trade Treaty, which is expected to put an end to the threat of the illegal trade in conventional weapons. Our commitment to disarmament has been manifested by our Prime Minister, Sheikh Hasina, who signed the Treaty just two weeks ago, on the occasion of her recent visit to the General Assembly at its sixty-eighth session on 26 September. Bangladesh was the first country in South Asia to do so. We would like to ratify the Treaty as soon as the necessary internal formalities for ratification have been completed. We hope the Treaty will soon enter into force and put an end to the illegal trade in and the illegitimate use of conventional weapons, which continue to fuel violence, fan existing conflicts and impose heavy human and humanitarian costs, affecting the lives and livelihoods of civilians and innocent people in many regions.

As we have mentioned time and time again in various disarmament forums, nuclear disarmament is a crucial issue for the survival of humankind and our planet. It has always been our firm conviction that nuclear weapons cannot ensure our ultimate security or peace for humankind. Unfortunately, a handful of States that are insensitive to the security of the majority continue to possess, or seek to possess, such destructive

weapons. However, resources that could feed and provide decent lives to deprived human beings are still being used to create ever more sophisticated nuclear weapons with the power to annihilate humankind and the world. We ask that handful of nuclear-weapon States to stop for a moment and think about the fact that they have been spending more than \$100 billion each year to research and test new nuclear arsenals, whereas an average of only \$50 billion per annum would be sufficient to halve poverty for nearly 5 billion people in the world, meeting all eight Millennium Development Goals by 2015.

All along, we have maintained that, as long as nuclear weapons exist, so do the risk and the threat of their use and their proliferation and the risk of them falling into the hands of terrorists. The only absolute guarantee against the danger of nuclear weapons is therefore their total elimination.

Until the total elimination of such weapons becomes a reality, non-nuclear-weapon States have the legitimate right to negative security assurances — assurances against any use or threat of use of nuclear weapons against them under any circumstances. Unfortunately, the existing provisions of negative security assurances, if there are any, are inadequate. They must be codified into a universal legal instrument.

As an interim measure, I would also like to underscore the importance of establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones. Such zones should be established where they do not at present exist, including South Asia and the Middle East. In that regard, I urge all nuclear-weapon States to ratify the related protocols to all treaties establishing such zones, withdraw any reservations of interpretive declarations incompatible with their objectives and purpose, and respect the denuclearized status of those zones.

When the United Nations was founded, in the mid-1940s, the horrors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki so strongly shook our conscience that the first General Assembly resolution to be adopted envisioned a world free of nuclear weapons. Sixty-seven years have elapsed since the adoption of resolution 1 (I). Unfortunately, humankind is still confronted today, as it was then, with an unprecedented threat of self-extinction arising from the massive and competitive accumulation of nuclear weapons sufficient to destroy all life on Earth. The time has come to conclude a comprehensive convention that will ensure the objective of a world free of nuclear weapons. Many world leaders expressed such views

during the first-ever General Assembly High-level Meeting on Nuclear Disarmament (see A/68/PV.11), held on 26 September. In that regard, Bangladesh fully supports the proposed follow-up action to the Meeting set out in a draft resolution to be introduced on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, including, among other things, a comprehensive convention on nuclear weapons.

We are legally bound by the constitutional commitment not to rest until a permanent guarantee of the total elimination of nuclear weapons is secured. We remain convinced that nuclear weapons, nuclear deterrents or the possession of nuclear weapons have no place in our national security or foreign policy architecture. The only purpose that nuclear power has for us is its peaceful use under the comprehensive safeguards agreement of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), which may help adjust the development challenges of many countries. In that regard, Bangladesh will insist on strict IAEA supervision, which has been working with us on the civilian peaceful use of nuclear technology, especially in our agriculture, energy and health sectors.

Following five decades of a struggle against nuclear testing, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) was humankind's first silver lining in the quest for a comprehensive, globally verifiable non-proliferation regime through a ban on all nuclear explosions. Thirty days within its adoption, Bangladesh, an annex 2 State, has demonstrated its full faith in that activity and was the first country from South Asia to sign the Treaty, in 1996, and to ratify it in 2000. Bangladesh remains a strong champion of the immediate entry into force of the CTBT. We have joined the forceful voices of 183 non-nuclear-weapon States and the 161 States parties to the CTBT. In arguing in the name of humankind, we call on all 13 countries that have as yet not signed and the 35 that have as yet not ratified the CTBT to do so without any further delay. Non-ratification of the CTBT by the remaining eight annex 2 States remains the only obstacle to the Treaty's entry into force and to the permanent banning of nuclear tests by anyone anywhere. The universalization and entry into force of CTBT at an early date will be crucial for attaining our goal of a nuclear-weapon-free world.

The Conference on Disarmament (CD) has remained deadlocked for decades now, wasting valuable resources and time. The last time that we agreed to negotiate in

the Conference was in 1996, for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, which was adopted by the General Assembly. But it has yet to enter into force. Ever since, the CD has remained stagnant, and it has been unable to undertake any substantive work, mostly as a result of the vested interests of a few Member States. There is also no discernible forward movement in the negotiation of a non-discriminatory, internationally and effectively verifiable treaty banning the production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons, including existing stocks. That must end. Pragmatic interventions are necessary to ensure that the CD upholds its legitimacy and credibility by breaking out of its current stalemate and engaging in substantive work.

Having acceded to Protocol 5 and amended article 1, Bangladesh has now fully acceded to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons Protocols. Bangladesh remains committed to the Biological Weapons Convention regime and attaches importance to the full implementation of the provisions of that Convention with a focus on confidence-building measures. As a State party to the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, Bangladesh calls for putting an end to the inhuman and unauthorized use of anti-personnel landmines.

Bangladesh attaches great importance to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC). Immediately after the ratification of CWC in 1997, Bangladesh submitted a separate declaration regarding chemical weapons and their production facilities. To meet the obligations of CWC, our Parliament passed the Chemical Weapons Prohibition Act of 2006. Following that, the Bangladesh National Authority for Chemical Weapons Convention was established. We believe that the use of chemical weapons anywhere by anyone, whether State or non-State actors, is unacceptable, and any breach of the international laws against the use of chemical weapons must be condemned. The recent events leading to the use of chemical weapons have revealed more than ever the urgent need for the complete destruction and elimination of all chemical weapons stockpiles in the world as soon as possible.

Bangladesh considers that outer space is part of the common heritage of humankind and calls upon all major spacefaring nations to avert the weaponization of outer space. We believe that the CD should make progress in that critical area by building on the constructive work done so far.

In conclusion, pursuing disarmament through multilateral engagement has historically been difficult. As the challenges of disarmament and international security have become increasingly complex and intertwined, we must learn to make multilateralism work to create a more secure world. It is our sincere hope that our collective endeavours in the First Committee will contribute to revitalizing the United Nations disarmament machinery and sustaining international peace and security through effective arms controls, non-proliferation and disarmament.

Mr. Bodini (San Marino): First of all, I would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as Chair of the First Committee, as well as the other members of the Bureau. San Marino is ready to support the work of the Committee and looks forward to a very productive session.

San Marino believes in the complete elimination of all nuclear weapons. The revitalization of the Conference on Disarmament and the full implementation of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) remain the cornerstone of the nuclear disarmament policy.

We are grateful to the United States and the Russian Federation, which together possess 90 per cent of the world's nuclear arsenal, for the reduction of their inventory. Their leadership in nuclear disarmament will lead the way. I am sure that the other nuclear States will follow their example.

We applaud the joint efforts of Russia and the United States to eliminate Syrian chemical weapons, and we look forward to the complete destruction of that arsenal, under United Nations supervision, in a short time. The Government and people of San Marino were profoundly shocked by the deadly use of such devastating arms against the civilian population, especially women and children.

San Marino is also very concerned about the proliferation of all weapons of mass destruction. Proliferation can only increase the probability that those weapons will be acquired by dangerous non-State actors. That is why we collectively, through United Nations efforts, must prevent such a tragic scenario.

San Marino applauds the adoption of the Arms Trade Treaty as a giant step by the General Assembly towards the regulation and control of the arms trade. The Treaty will save many lives and tremendously reduce human suffering.

In today's environment of increasing economic, social and political instability throughout the world, it is of paramount importance that the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Secretariat accelerate the process of dismantling all weapons of mass destruction.

To address our new global challenges, we have to show stronger determination. San Marino, a true believer in peaceful solutions to disputes through dialogue and negotiation, is very pleased by this year's achievements in the disarmament field. Let us continue along that path. I am confident that the Committee will benefit from the positive momentum and will lead us forward in further improving our disarmament agenda.

Mr. Imnadze (Georgia): Let me begin by congratulating you, Sir, on your election as Chair of the First Committee. My congratulations also go to other members of the Bureau. We are looking forward to your competent and prudent leadership. Allow me to assure you that the Georgian delegation will support and assist you in your endeavours.

While condemning once again the use of chemical weapons, Georgia welcomes the efforts of the international community to tackle the issue in Syria and regards the agreement reached in Geneva in September as a positive development. But at the same time, we expect that the United Nations and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons will expeditiously and successfully fulfil their mandates.

The use of chemical weapons in Syria offers us a stark reminder of why the international community has an obligation to intensify its efforts for the elimination of weapons of mass destruction in all their forms and from all military arsenals. In that light, let me stress again that, despite a wide understanding that nuclear weapons continue to pose an existential threat to humankind, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, as the cornerstone of the international nuclear non-proliferation system, still lacks significant elements to provide a comprehensive response to the challenges we all face.

The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, as a vital instrument for nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, must enter into force without further delay. For its part, Georgia continues to actively cooperate with the Provisional Technical Secretariat of the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization to strengthen the monitoring and verification system.

Preventing the risk of nuclear terrorism and improving security by providing safe storage facilities for radioactive materials remain top priorities for my country. We have joined the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism and strongly support consolidating the efforts of the international community to combat the illicit acquisition, retention, transportation, transfer and use of nuclear materials and radioactive substances.

We regret that the international disarmament forums, particularly the Conference on Disarmament, continue to fail to fulfil their mandates. Georgia supports all efforts aimed at reinvigorating the multilateral disarmament frameworks. Further procrastination may well lead to dwindling confidence on the part of the international community in the Conference on Disarmament. Therefore, we hope that the open-ended working group to develop proposals to take forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations for the achievement and maintenance of a world without nuclear weapons, which met in Geneva this year, can offer a much-needed opportunity to move forward.

Georgia fully shares the common approaches of the international community regarding the problem of illicit trade in conventional arms. The uncontrolled dissemination and excessive accumulation of conventional arms and ammunition represent a serious threat to international peace and security. Due to the well-known security situation in Georgia, we consider the creation of an effective, legally binding mechanism aimed at curbing the illegal flow of arms a matter of primary importance for us.

Georgia believes that the adoption of the legally binding Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), aimed at regulating international trade in conventional arms, is a historic diplomatic achievement and is indeed a victory for the world's people. We are convinced that the Treaty has real potential to eradicate the illicit arms trade, to genuinely contribute to humanitarian objectives and, overall, to foster global peace and security. We applaud the relevant provisions of the document, for example, article 7, which requires all State parties to take human security considerations into account in making relevant assessments on whether exported arms would contribute to or undermine peace and security and, if there is an overriding risk of negative consequences, to not authorize the export.

In that light, I would like to use this opportunity to announce Georgia's support for Switzerland's proposal to host the future secretariat of the ATT in Geneva.

Georgia, as a sponsor, together with many other States, of the process launched in December 2006, is currently finalizing the necessary internal formalities to ensure a timely joining of that milestone document.

Along with the old threats that we have been facing for many years and decades, a new one — a cyberattack — has recently emerged and is evolving rapidly. At this stage of globalization, I doubt we have sufficient understanding of its potential impact on our interdependent world. Consequently, we lack the necessary instruments to adequately respond to the challenges posed by cyberattacks. Georgia believes that it is the duty of the United Nations and the First Committee to delve into that problem and, ultimately, contribute to providing a relevant platform and relevant mechanisms and instruments for eradicating cyberthreats.

As I speak, 20 per cent of my country remains under illegal military occupation, which poses a serious threat to my nation's security and the well-being of its citizens. The Russian military build-up has intensified exponentially in the aftermath of the 2008 invasion, in flagrant violation of international law and the six-point ceasefire agreement. In addition, as long as international mechanisms are totally absent in the occupied territories, there are no guarantees that the military arsenal, including the most dangerous weapons systems, could not be transferred to terrorist or criminal groups.

Allow me also to refer to some of the most pressing recent developments. Despite Georgia's peaceful initiatives aimed at improving relations with its northern neighbour, the occupation forces have begun the large-scale installation of barbed wire and fences along the occupation line. In recent months, that process has intensified and expanded. By now, the total length of barbed-wires fences in central Georgia has reached 35 kilometres, and the process is well under way. In many places, barbed-wire fences leave the houses and agricultural lands of local residents on opposite sides of the occupation line, causing dire humanitarian consequences.

Similarly in Abkhazia, Georgia, 3-kilometre-long trenches have already been created, with embankments and engineering structures erected along the occupation line. The latest wave of "borderization" has been accompanied by incidents of intimidation and acts of violence against local residents. Families have been

forced to demolish their houses and abandon ancestral land. The installation of barbed-wire fences in the Tskhinvali region has already affected 65 local families, leaving them virtually without land or subsistence and creating a new wave of internally displaced persons.

The ongoing process of occupation divides families and communities and prevents people-to-people contacts. People residing within the occupied regions and in the adjacent areas are deprived of their fundamental rights and freedoms, including, but not limited to, the freedom of movement, the right to family life, the right to an education in one's native language and other civil and economic rights.

We are convinced that it is time for the international community to stand up for the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. Hence, the First Committee, besides being seized of developing initiatives and ideas to address existing problems in the fields of non-proliferation and disarmament, should also address the most critical issues relating to international, regional and national security.

The Chair (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to Mr. Villacorta Noval, speaking on behalf of the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Mr. Villacorta Noval (Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to lead the work of the First Committee and to wish you every success in your endeavour.

Over the past four years, the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (OPANAL) has worked together with the Committee on its revitalization process and on establishing a political agenda corresponding to the current international context.

At this time, we are pleased to inform the Committee that the 33 States forming the nuclear-weapon-free zone in Latin America and the Caribbean adopted, by consensus, a resolution entitled "Urgent need for general and complete nuclear disarmament" during meetings of the OPANAL General Conference, held in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in August.

It has been 46 years since the Latin American and Caribbean States signed the Treaty of Tlatelolco, whereby they committed themselves not only to the military denuclearization of the region, but also to the

ultimate goal of the zone, which is to achieve general and complete disarmament at a later stage.

The resolution marks the start of the later stage referred to in the preamble of the Treaty and emphasizes the urgent need to start negotiations for a universal legally binding instrument aimed at prohibiting nuclear weapons.

Latin America and the Caribbean have complied with the non-proliferation norms and have made concrete contributions to the nuclear-disarmament process; however, that is not enough. As long as nuclear weapons exist anywhere in the world, we will live under the threat and worry that any explosion, whether accidental or intentional, could have global catastrophic humanitarian consequences.

We must therefore move forward towards the abolition of such weapons. To that end, it is important that the nuclear-weapon States eliminate the role that such weapons play in their military and security policies.

In the meantime, OPANAL member States urge the signatory States to the two Additional Protocols to the Treaty of Tlatelolco to modify or withdraw the reservations or interpretative declarations that they issued upon signature or ratification.

In 2013, we achieved further progress at the regional and international levels. On the former, we would like to highlight the joint efforts made between OPANAL and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) to promote actions in favour of total and complete nuclear disarmament.

It is especially important to mention cooperation “to articulate a joint position regarding the issues relating to nuclear disarmament”, as stated in CELAC’s 2011 special communiqué on the total elimination of nuclear weapons and reiterated in the Santiago Declaration adopted at the first summit of CELAC heads of State and Government, held in Santiago from 26 to 28 January, and also included in the CELAC declaration on nuclear disarmament adopted on 20 August in Buenos Aires.

In the international context, we highly welcome the convening, for the first time in history, of the General Assembly’s High-level Meeting on Nuclear Disarmament, held here, at Headquarters, on 26 September (see A/68/PV.11). At that meeting, CELAC’s interim presidency reiterated our region’s consensus that achieving an international legally binding

instrument banning nuclear weapons is necessary, as it represents the only guarantee of security against the use or threat of use of those weapons.

In turn, we could not agree more with Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, who stated at the same meeting that:

“Some might complain that nuclear disarmament is little more than a dream, but that ignores the very tangible benefits that disarmament would have for all humankind. Its success would strengthen international peace and security. It would free up vast and much-needed resources for social and economic development... And it would remove a layer of fear that clouds all human existence.”
(A/68/PV.11, p. 3)

The adoption in 2012 and the implementation in 2013 of resolution 67/56 represented a landmark, as it established an open-ended working group to develop proposals to take forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations. We acknowledge the efforts of the presidency of the open-ended working group, led by Costa Rica, as well as the participation of various actors in the consultations, as well as the resulting report submitted to the General Assembly (see A/68/514). The Secretary General of OPANAL and OPANAL member States also participated in the debates.

Furthermore, in the same vein of positive developments, we enthusiastically welcome the preparations being made by Mexico to hold the second Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons, on 13 and 14 February 2014, in Nayarit. We hope that all States will take part in that event. We also acknowledge the importance of the first conference on that subject, held in Oslo in March this year.

As is clear, 2013 has been the year when a rainbow first began to appear on the horizon with respect to a world free from nuclear weapons. Certainly, we will live in a world without nuclear weapons, as was the case before 1945. Now more than ever before, OPANAL and its member States are committed to that cause. We will continue to participate actively at the regional and global levels to promote nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation education, coordinate efforts with other nuclear-weapon-free zones, discuss multilateral initiatives leading to negotiations on the abolition of nuclear weapons and coordinate efforts among Governments, international organizations and civil society to support that goal.

The Chair (*spoke in Arabic*): I shall now give the floor to members who wish to speak in exercise of the right of reply. May I remind delegations that statements in exercise of the right of reply by any delegation at any meeting shall not exceed two and that, in accordance with decision 34/401, statements in exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Belousov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The Russian Federation has taken the floor in the light of the statement made by the representative of Georgia, which, once again, appears to be have no relation to reality. The Russian military presence in the two independent States of South Ossetia and Abkhazia is legal and in line with the bilateral agreements made with the two Republics and assists in ensuring peace and security in the region.

With regard to the current measures in Abkhazia and South Ossetia to establish the borders of the two independent States, we would again note that the Republic of South Ossetia and the Republic of Abkhazia are both independent States with full rights to control their territories by any means they consider necessary. The matter of the border regime lies exclusively within the mandates of the authorities of those two States.

In line with its international obligations, the Russian Federation and its border-control guards are carrying out the tasks — and only those tasks — that have been delegated to them by the two parties in accordance with the bilateral agreements of 2009 on joint border-control efforts.

We note with regard to South Ossetia that the border-control measures under way are aimed, first and foremost, at reducing the number of incidents tied to careless border violations resulting from the actions of local residents from both sides and thus to eliminate a factor that has led to increased tensions on the border.

It is a fact that since the border operation was carried out, such incidents have been significantly reduced, as confirmed by the European Union Monitoring Mission in Georgia, *inter alia*. Unfortunately, in the West, a persistent point of view is that such arguments should not be heard and that no attempt has been made to deal with the situation. Indeed, it would be fair to note that the authors of those statements continue to make false statements regarding the border operations in Georgia.

Mr. Imnadze (Georgia): There is an apparent discrepancy between the statement made by the Russian delegation and a statement made by the Russian high leadership, which openly stated that they had been preparing for such scenarios long before the August war, and that the military exercises that had been conducted on the border with Georgia for several years before 2008 constituted yet another piece of evidence of that fact.

However, to avoid any natural bias that a Permanent Representative might have, let me recall that there is a report by the International Independent Fact-Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia, headed by Ambassador Heidi Tagliavini, containing an accurate reference to the facts of what had happened years ago.

As to what is happening now, first of all, the European Union Monitoring Mission in Georgia is still, today, denied access to the other side of the barbed wire, that is, the other side of the occupation line. They remain on the territory that is under the control of Georgia, but they do not have access to the other side.

Georgia has fully cooperated with all of the international bodies on the ground to remedy the problems. However, the vacuum that was created by the blockage of the mandate of the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia in 2009 still remains, and we are reaping the consequences of that today.

Georgia has spared no effort to strengthen its capacities aimed at normalizing relations with Russia and has demonstrated openness to results-oriented discussions and negotiations based on the principles of international law.

We offered to sign an agreement on the non-use of force, and last, but not least, we have established the Office of the Special Adviser to the Prime Minister for dialogue with Russia. We are determined to continue on that path in order to achieve a durable and peaceful solution. But until then, we all have to work to alleviate the human suffering that is being caused by the imposition of barbed wire across village territories.

May I also refer to the *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* definition of “occupation”, namely, the holding and control of an area by a foreign military force. Occupation does not lead to a new reality or a new independent State. Moreover, the illegitimate presence of the Russian military on the ground is a well-known fact that has been confirmed by international

observers, including the European Union Monitoring Mission, which is on the ground. In addition, there are Russian citizens among the leadership of the governing authorities of the South Ossetia/Tskhinvali region and Abkhazia.

Unfortunately, the situation remains dire, and I believe that both parties have to work to address the humanitarian problem that the populations on both sides of the border are currently facing.

The meeting rose at 12.40 p.m.