



General Assembly

Sixty-eighth session

First Committee

8th meeting

Monday, 14 October 2013, 10 a.m.
New York

Official Records

Chair: Mr. Dabbashi (Libya)

The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Agenda items 89 to 107 (continued)

General debate on all disarmament and related international security agenda items

The Chair (*spoke in Arabic*): The list of speakers for the second half of our session — which will be held from Thursday, 17 October, to Tuesday, 29 October, to discuss topics under various agenda items and to present draft resolutions and decisions — is now open for representatives to inscribe their names on it.

I should like to remind delegations to kindly adhere to the agreed time limit of 10 minutes when speaking in their national capacity, or 15 minutes when speaking on behalf of several delegations.

Mr. Sin Son Ho (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): I take this opportunity to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as the Chair of the First Committee. I hope this session will bring success under your able leadership.

I would like to associate myself with the statement made by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (see A/C.1/68/PV.3).

It is humankind's common will and desire to achieve a world free of nuclear weapons through the comprehensive and total elimination of nuclear weapons. The first-ever United Nations High-level Meeting on Nuclear Disarmament (see A/68/PV.11), convened on 26 September, fully reflects the pressing needs of the present time. Today, the United Nations is facing the

task of promoting nuclear disarmament, as discussed at the High-level Meeting. Nuclear disarmament negotiations should start immediately, and the overdue international legal instruments for banning the use of nuclear weapons and for negative security assurances for non-nuclear-weapon States should be drafted.

In that regard, the United States, as the first country to use nuclear weapons and also as the largest nuclear-weapon Power, must take the lead in promoting the necessary measures for nuclear disarmament. No progress will be made as long as the so-called nuclear disarmament initiatives are purely in the interest of having strategic superiority or putting unilateral pressure on any other country to make it abandon a nuclear deterrent.

It is the consistent position of the Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to realize the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula. The nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula originated with the United States deployment of nuclear weapons in South Korea, and it has continued to date because of the persistent hostile policy against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Therefore, if the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula is to be accomplished, the United States nuclear threats against the Democratic People's Republic should be removed once and for all and the entire peninsula, including South Korea, should be turned into a zone free of nuclear weapons. We will continue to make strenuous efforts to settle peacefully the nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula through unconditional dialogue and negotiations.

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Today, the Korean peninsula remains one of the globe's hottest spots, with serious implications for peace and security in North-East Asia and the world at large. The tension on the Korean peninsula this year has been intensified in an unprecedented way by the United States through its flagrant infringement upon the sovereignty of our legitimate right to launch peaceful satellites and by enforcing the worst-ever physical threats to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea by bringing into South Korea a triad of its nuclear-strike means and the most sophisticated weapons.

It has been 60 years since the signing of the Korean Armistice Agreement, but the vicious cycle of confrontations and aggravated tension are continuing unabated. The root cause is none other than the United States' hostile policy against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Notwithstanding all those facts, the United States is misleading public opinion by spreading false allegations about the so-called provocations and threats from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. In pursuit of its military hegemony over North-East Asia by keeping the Korean peninsula as its stepping stone, the United States has designated the Democratic People's Republic of Korea as a target of its pre-emptive strike. It is continuing war drills against the Democratic People's Republic by massively building up hundreds of thousands of troops and the latest weaponry, while increasing its military muscle in South Korea and the vicinity. The reality speaks for itself. It is more than clear who is encouraging confrontation and tension on the Korean peninsula.

The Korean people, who have been living with the unspeakable pain of national division caused by foreign forces for over half a century and under the direct and consistent military threats of the United States, have a great desire for peace, more than any other nation. In particular, the Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and its people have set the building of economic power and improving people's livelihoods as the general objective, and therefore creating a stable and peaceful environment is invaluable.

By means of its consistent and peace-loving policy and the generous efforts of the Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, we have advanced various peace initiatives, including the one proposed in January 2010 on the speedy opening of

talks on replacing the ceasefire agreement with a peace agreement.

In the face of the ongoing persistent military threats and provocations, we have been demonstrating maximum patience and exerting continuous and strenuous efforts for the sake of peace and stability on the Korean peninsula. If the United States is truly in favour of easing tension and achieving lasting peace on the Korean peninsula, it should show that by abandoning its hostile policy towards the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and should move forward to peaceful coexistence with us.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea will in future also try every effort to safeguard peace and security on the Korean peninsula and in the region and to bring about common prosperity, as its lofty obligations.

Mr. Al-Ajmi (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to extend to you, Mr. Chair, and to the members of the Bureau, on behalf of the delegation of the State of Kuwait, our sincere congratulations on your election to lead the work of the First Committee at the sixty-eighth session of the General Assembly. We are certain that your vast experience and capabilities will have a major impact on the successful conduct of the work of the Committee. I must also express our appreciation to your predecessor, the Permanent Representative of Indonesia, for his great efforts in conducting the work of the previous session.

I also would like to express my country's support for the statements delivered by the Permanent Representatives of the Kingdom of Bahrain on behalf of the States members of the League of Arab States, and of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

The State of Kuwait reasserts its firm position on questions relating to disarmament and international security, based on its belief in the fundamental role of the United Nations in achieving the lofty goal of maintaining international peace and security in the shadow of the growing threats resulting from the continued existence of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction. The proliferation and possession of nuclear weapons and the emergence of the dangers of their use, or even the threat of their use, pose an exceptional danger that may go beyond endangering regional and international peace and stability to threatening life on the planet Earth.

In that regard, the State of Kuwait has signed and ratified international treaties and conventions relating to disarmament, such as the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT); the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction; the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction; the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty; the Convention on Early Notification of a Nuclear Accident; and the comprehensive safeguards agreement of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and its additional protocol. Recently, the State of Kuwait also signed and ratified the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects, and its five Protocols.

Kuwait thereby affirmed the importance of those conventions and treaties in limiting the dangers of such weapons, and in particular the NPT, which is considered a pillar for multilateral action to achieve disarmament and international security, as well as the need to deal in a balanced manner with its three elements, especially the inalienable right of all States to develop nuclear research, production and use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, in accordance with the comprehensive safeguards system of the IAEA.

In that connection, the State of Kuwait signed in September its second Country Programme Framework on technical cooperation with the IAEA for the period 2014-2019. The main framework of that agreement will focus on cooperation in such fields as the health-care sector, the oil industry, aquifers, environmental studies and radiation safety. While it is not a producer or manufacturer of arms, the State of Kuwait joined the Framework in the belief that the future lies in the survival of humankind, rather than in its extinction, as well as in channelling financial resources to economic, social, human and political development.

The proactive regional efforts in the field of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, carried out through the establishment of zones free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in many parts of the world, represented a genuine step towards achieving a world free of nuclear weapons. However, the realization of similar measures in some parts of the world is still faltering.

The Middle East region suffers from chronic challenges that have disrupted the vision of its future based on development and regional and international cooperation. Those challenges have also disrupted the political and economic conditions in the region, as a result of the prevailing lack of confidence, represented by Israel's possession of weapons of mass destruction and its defiance of legitimate international decisions by not acceding to the NPT or subjecting its facilities to the comprehensive safeguards system of the IAEA.

In that regard, the State of Kuwait deeply regrets the failure in 2012 to convene a conference to establish a zone free of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East, in implementation of the resolution adopted by the 2010 NPT Review Conference. We hope that the conference will be convened as soon as possible during the current year with no further delays in order to attain tangible results and establish a clear implementation mechanism, in accordance with a set time schedule, with a view to establishing a zone free of nuclear and all other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East region.

Concerning Iran's nuclear programme, my delegation supports the ongoing efforts to resolve the crisis peacefully and in a manner that will preserve the right of the Islamic Republic of Iran and all countries of the region to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, under the supervision and monitoring of the IAEA. We also call upon the Islamic Republic of Iran to cooperate fully with international efforts, work towards implementing the relevant Security Council resolutions, and cooperate with the IAEA and implement its resolutions so as to end the crisis and guarantee the stability and safety of the Arab Gulf region in particular and the wider Middle East region in general.

The State of Kuwait welcomes the progress achieved in some disarmament fields, especially since the General Assembly adopted the Arms Trade Treaty in April, which reflected the desire of the international community to limit the destructive negative effects of such arms and to ensure the maintenance of international peace and security. In that regard, the State of Kuwait reiterates its positions, as presented in March 2013 on behalf of the Group of Arab States during the final United Nations Conference on the Arms Trade Treaty, concerning the need to consider the importance of the Treaty being consistent with the legitimate right of States to defend themselves, ensure regional security

and the right of peoples subjected to foreign occupation to self-determination, and prevent the foreign occupation of territories or the consequences of that occupation on the right to produce, export, import and transfer conventional weapons.

In conclusion, my country's delegation hopes that the consultations within the First Committee will be characterized by transparency and resilience and will seek a consensus that meets the aspirations and hopes of Member States to achieve international peace and security.

Mr. Langeland (Norway): Let me start by echoing other speakers in welcoming you, Sir, as the Chair for our deliberations at the sixty-eighth session of the First Committee.

It is evident that the session will be coloured by the alarm over the recent use of chemical weapons. At the same time, there is increased awareness of the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons and a strong call for the full implementation of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) commitments. We applaud the adoption of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT).

The adoption of the Arms Trade Treaty by the General Assembly this year was historic. After many years of hard work and two failed attempts, the international community finally succeeded in adopting a legally binding instrument on reducing illicit and irresponsible international trade in arms.

Norway attaches great importance to the humanitarian dimension of the Treaty, for it regulates more than just trade; it is also a humanitarian instrument and must be implemented as such. Nothing is perfect, and neither is the Arms Trade Treaty, but it has the potential to reduce human suffering and armed violence in general. The ATT should, when it enters into force, be a dynamic and living instrument, open for improvements and changes in the future. We see it as an important addition to the humanitarian disarmament efforts, and in that context we should learn from the valuable experiences gained from the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention and the Convention on Cluster Munitions in its future implementation.

The most important task ahead of us is to ensure a thorough and effective implementation of the ATT. We must ensure that it fulfils its humanitarian potential. Let us all apply the Treaty's provisions to the broadest

range of conventional arms. Let us all apply the provisions on the prohibition and on the export and export assessment in the true spirit of international humanitarian law and respect for human rights. Let us all practice transparency to the greatest extent possible.

The immediate task ahead of us is to work for the Treaty's rapid entry into force. We have reasons for optimism: 113 States have signed and seven have ratified it. Norway signed on 3 June, and we are preparing for prompt ratification. We want the ATT to be universal. We therefore welcome new signatory States during the Assembly's current session and after, and we urge States to speed up their ratification process.

Finally, let me pay tribute to civil society and the contribution it made during the whole ATT process, including the negotiations. Without its efforts and commitment, I do not believe we would have achieved the results we did in April this year. I encourage civil society to continue to contribute during the important implementation phase.

Since last year, the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons has been firmly on our agenda, fully in line with the outcome of the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. States parties expressed their deep concern at the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons.

In March this year, Norway hosted an international conference in Oslo on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons. A total of 128 States attended, together with the relevant United Nations humanitarian organizations, the International Committee of the Red Cross and representatives of civil society. The main conclusion from the conference was that no State or international body would be able to address the humanitarian emergency caused by a nuclear weapon detonation in any adequate or meaningful way. The conference established, in factual terms, what "catastrophic humanitarian consequences" means and implies.

We warmly welcome Mexico's offer to host a follow-up conference next February. It will address the long-term consequences of a nuclear detonation and the necessary preparedness for addressing such a catastrophe. This is of great relevance for all Member States, both nuclear-weapon States and non-nuclear-weapon States. We therefore encourage all countries to participate constructively in this important discussion.

Norway attaches great importance to the full implementation of the action plan adopted at the 2010 NPT Review Conference, which covers the three pillars: disarmament, non-proliferation and peaceful uses.

Norway remains a staunch supporter of bilateral disarmament measures such as the New START treaty. We welcome President Obama's Berlin address in June, where he highlighted the need for further disarmament steps. We also greatly appreciate the forward-looking cooperation with the United Kingdom on verification of nuclear disarmament. Furthermore, we welcome the decision to set up a group of governmental experts on a fissile material cut-off treaty.

Multilateralism in nuclear disarmament remains plagued by its long-lasting impasse. There can be no doubt that our overall objective is to achieve a world free of nuclear weapons. We may disagree on the way to reach that common goal. Pending the total elimination of nuclear weapons, we should continue our efforts to further reduce the role of this category of weapons in security policies and doctrines. We should consolidate existing and support new nuclear-weapon-free zones, particularly in the Middle East. Thus it is of great importance that the conference on a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East be held before 2015. It is also vital that the process of reducing the existing arsenals of nuclear weapons continues and, hopefully, accelerates.

At the same time, it is evident that a world free of nuclear weapons requires a credible non-proliferation regime. Norway maintains its call for the full universalization of the comprehensive safeguards of the International Atomic Energy Agency and the additional protocol. We support efforts to develop proliferation-resistant nuclear fuel cycles. We support the programme of action from the Nuclear Security Summit to secure all sensitive nuclear materials. Even more importantly, we stress the need to resolve all outstanding proliferation concerns. We urge Iran to resolve the outstanding issues related to its past and current nuclear programme, so it fully lives up to its NPT obligations. Furthermore, Norway strongly condemns the nuclear test carried out by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Any use of chemical weapons is utterly unacceptable, and those responsible must be brought to justice and the case referred to the International Criminal Court. Norway welcomes the adoption of

Security Council resolution 2118 (2013). The use of chemical weapons would constitute an imminent threat to international peace and security. It is encouraging that Syria today has become a party to the Chemical Weapons Convention, and Norway urges the Syrian Government to fully comply with its provisions. Norway is currently exploring ways to contribute to the objective of ensuring that Syrian chemical weapons are destroyed in a safe and expedient manner.

We have recently witnessed the use of chemical weapons, which illustrates the urgent need to further strengthen the norm against this category of weapons of mass destruction, as set out in the 1925 Geneva Protocol and the Chemical Weapons Convention. Norway therefore welcomes the successful outcome of the Third Review Conference of the Chemical Weapons Convention last April and emphasizes the importance of implementing the decisions made at that Conference. We underline the need for the full universalisation of the Chemical Weapons Convention, as well as of the Biological Weapons Convention, and we urge all the remaining States that are not party to these Conventions to join them.

Allow me also to join other speakers in congratulating the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons on being awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

It is the expectation of my delegation that the First Committee will reaffirm the norms against chemical and biological weapons, provide guidance on how to bring nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation forward, and reiterate its strong support for the ATT.

Mr. Hassan (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): I should like to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as Chair of the First Committee. You are an excellent diplomat, as you demonstrated brilliantly when Libya was a member of the Security Council, as well as during the management of the crisis during the revolution led by the fraternal people of Libya. That is why we are delighted to see you lead the work of this Committee, particularly this year.

I thank Ms. Angela Kane, the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, for her comprehensive statement at the opening of the Committee's general debate (see A/C.1/68/PV.3).

The Sudan associates itself with the statements made by the representatives of Indonesia on behalf of Non-Aligned Movement, of Bahrain on behalf of the

Arab Group and of Nigeria on behalf of the African Group (see A/C.1/68/PV.3).

The First Committee is meeting at a time when the world is seeking to create a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East, pursuant to the relevant resolution of the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). We had hoped that the conference to establish such a zone would take place in the time frame planned for it. Unfortunately, it did not, and there has been no progress after two years. We strongly call for the convening of that conference this year. We appeal to the international community to back all efforts for the success of the conference, as well as the creation of transparent implementation mechanisms and a set time frame.

The changes taking place across the world and in certain regions, particularly in the turbulent Middle East, require the conference to be convened as quickly as possible, specifically this year. That is why the Sudan is playing an active role in international efforts to achieve disarmament. We have already acceded to a number of important instruments and treaties, particularly the NPT and the Treaty of Pelindaba establishing the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone. In June 2004, we also became a party to the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty, after participating in a workshop in Vienna on the International Atomic Energy Agency's current goals across the world.

In 2004 Khartoum hosted the first conference of African national institutions for the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention. The conference gave rise to important recommendations, in particular those concerning the establishment of Africa as a chemical-weapons-free zone.

We are convinced that the peaceful uses of nuclear technology continue to be necessary and legitimate. A State's inalienable right to the peaceful use of such energy must be upheld.

As for small arms and light weapons, my country has felt the serious economic impact of their use, which is further exacerbated by other factors such as climate change, drought and desertification. Those weapons are used by rival tribes in wars for water and grazing grounds, and my country understands the gravity of the threat they pose. That is why the Sudan remains extremely active in various international forums and in the work undertaken by the national office for

combating small arms and light weapons. We know that the proliferation of such weapons benefits terrorists and criminal networks.

In that connection, the Sudan is active in the African Union, the League of Arab States and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development. Last year, we hosted a regional workshop on combating the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. We are engaged in bilateral contacts with neighbouring countries to demarcate borders and ensure border security and control, given the porous nature of our borders, especially with the Central African Republic and Chad.

Nationally, the Sudan is making great strides in 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 by creating national institutions to that end. A national liaison office has been established within the Ministry of the Interior to implement strategies, plans and policies to address these weapons. An interministerial working group and other entities have been created to follow up the implementation of the strategy of the regional offices.

The Sudan has developed a five-year plan, guided by the following criteria. The first involves aligning national legislations and laws with United Nations programmes; secondly, digitizing and publishing a database concerning weapons and arsenals and monitoring the database in order to provide weapons permits; thirdly, raising awareness and strengthening the capacity-building of relevant institutions and border institutions; fourthly, coordinating among regional and subregional organizations to bolster the management of weapons stockpiles and end-user certificates; and fifthly, strengthening the tracing and marking system.

In conclusion, the 2006 Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development has remarkably demonstrated the intricate interlinkage between development and armed conflict. That is why the Security Council must take those two aspects into account when addressing conflict-resolution issues affecting developing countries and when considering peacebuilding or peacekeeping mandates in those countries. Issues of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration should be considered — including development and natural causes, such as drought, desertification and climate change, as a priority — when

dealing with countries emerging from conflict, as was the case in Darfur.

Most modern-day conflicts involve underdevelopment and a lack of resources. They are often exacerbated by environmental factors, including drought, desertification and climate change, as has been clearly demonstrated in the conflict in Darfur, which we overcame by signing the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur. In that light, development must be considered as a key factor in efforts to combat the widespread use of small arms and light weapons. State capacities must be strengthened in developing States, but not only through the provision of groups of experts, as the Security Council has done and continues to do, as the panels of experts tend to focus greater priority on the basic symptoms of a conflict, such as the proliferation of weapons, rather than on its root causes.

Finally, during the discussions, my delegation will especially focus on the issues of conventional weapons and small arms and light weapons. We assure the Chair of our continued availability and constructive participation in the Committee's work in order to meet the desired goals.

Mr. Tanin (Afghanistan): To begin, I congratulate you, Sir, on your election as Chairman of the First Committee. We wish you and the members of the Bureau every success in leading the work of our Committee and assure you of our full support and cooperation.

The Islamic Republic of Afghanistan associates itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (see A/C.1/68/PV.3).

I wish to make the following observations in my national capacity. Afghanistan reiterates its full commitment to multilateral diplomacy, as it is an important principle for advancing disarmament, international security and non-proliferation. We believe that the global goal of arms control, arms reduction and the full eradication of weapons of mass destruction will be realized only with strong, collective political will.

Since 2001, we have witnessed a number of developments that provide the foundation for effective arms control, arms reduction and non-proliferation. Twelve years ago, the General Assembly adopted the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. In 2005, it adopted the International Tracing Instrument, which

is an important tool in curtailing illegal weapons and munitions. Most recently, the Assembly adopted the Arms Trade Treaty to regulate the international trade in conventional arms.

Afghanistan welcomes the outcome of the High-level Meeting of the General Assembly on Nuclear Disarmament, held on 26 September (see A/68/PV.11). That landmark event affirmed the international community's collective desire to achieve a world free of any type of nuclear weapon. Afghanistan supports all initiatives in the sphere of nuclear disarmament. Consistent with a core pillar of our foreign policy, we are fully committed to realizing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Asia and in other parts of the world. In that regard, we are party to several treaties and conventions dealing with nuclear weapons and non-proliferation. They include the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. And we are in the process of strengthening our disarmament and non-proliferation legal framework.

Since the fall of the Taliban regime in 2001, the Government of Afghanistan has initiated several measures at the national level based on our international commitments, so as to combat the production of and trafficking in substances that might be used to make chemical and biological weapons. In 2010, President Karzai issued a decree that prohibits the import, export and transport of ammonium nitrate. It is important that Afghanistan's efforts in that regard be supported at regional and international levels.

Afghanistan fully supports the Programme of Action on Small Arms and considers that the adoption of the outcome document at the conclusion of the Second United Nations Conference to Review Progress Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action on Small Arms, convened last year, presents an effective framework for concrete action to implement the Programme of Action.

Looking forward, more work remains to be done, particularly in the area of illegal arms tracing. Greater cooperation and collaboration is necessary. Many States lack sufficient capacity to exert effective control of illicit arms within their borders. Speaking from our experience, we can attest that the terrorists' access to illegal small arms and light weapons has fuelled the cycle of violence in Afghanistan and in our region.

Having experienced close to three decades of armed conflict, Afghanistan has been one of the main victims of small arms and light weapons. During that period, millions of illegal arms and light weapons were imported or trafficked into our territory. Such weapons are responsible for killing and injuring hundreds of thousands of Afghans.

Over the past 12 years, Afghanistan has registered important progress in the area of disarmament. We have implemented security-sector reform focused on the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of combatants and the disbanding of illegal armed groups. Through that initiative we have collected thousands of small arms and light weapons and millions of munitions, which have been deposited with the country's security institutions.

No State has been as affected by the use of landmines as Afghanistan during the past three decades. Over a million people lost their lives or were disabled as a result of landmines, and the widespread destruction and loss of life continues today. Moreover, at present, armed militant groups still use mines to threaten stability, safety and development in Afghanistan.

In 2012 and in the first six months of 2013, approximately 3,000 people were killed or injured by landmines. The continued use of those weapons by the Taliban is very serious and worrying, as it threatens the development and prosperity of Afghan citizens.

We are working to implement the mine-action programme and we have made important progress in that regard, striving to become mine-free by 2023. That said, we face financial constraints in implementing the mine action programme. The Government of Afghanistan appeals to the international community to pledge financial assistance to help us achieve our goal of a mine-free Afghanistan.

Over the past five years, the improvised explosive devices used by the Taliban and other armed anti-Government groups have posed a major threat to the security and stability of our country. They have caused an overwhelming loss of life among ordinary civilians, as well as Afghan and international security forces. Many of the precursors, substances and materials used to make those bombs are trafficked into Afghanistan. That must be stopped, and we call on our international and regional partners to support us in that regard.

Afghanistan is fully committed to the eradication of cluster munitions. It ratified the Oslo Convention

on Cluster Munitions in September 2011. With the destruction of 546 different munitions in 2012, Afghanistan is pleased to have destroyed all weaponry of this kind in its military stockpile. We are fully committed to the provisions of the Convention on Cluster Munitions.

Mr. Ahidjo (Cameroon) (*spoke in French*): Since this is the first time my delegation is taking the floor, I should like to begin by adding my voice to those of previous speakers who have congratulated you, Mr. Chairman, and through you the other members of the Bureau, on your election to lead our Committee. Your personal experience and common sense will be ensure the success of our deliberations. I assure you of the support and cooperation of my delegation in the discharge of your duties.

Our Committee's work should allow us to address the major challenges in the areas of disarmament and international security, whose importance to the international community has been noted by various delegations that have already spoken. My delegation understands all the concerns expressed so far by the representatives of Member States.

We align ourselves with the statements made on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, the Group of 77 and China and the Group of Arab States by the representatives of Indonesia, Fiji and Nigeria, respectively (see A/C.1/68/PV.3).

Nuclear weapons still pose an existential risk to humankind, and the regime that has been set up to control them is incomplete. The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) has still not entered into force, and negotiations have not begun either on a fissile material treaty or on negative security guarantees. Nevertheless, we hope that the Group of Governmental Experts — the establishment of which was decided during the First Committee's work last year — will facilitate the prompt launching of negotiations, in the framework of the Conference on Disarmament, on a fissile-material treaty that includes all parties concerned.

Until the CTBT comes into force, Cameroon expects the international community to help in strengthening its abilities — seismic, hydroacoustic, infrasound, airborne radioactivity detection — to detect nuclear explosions and a credible and effective fight against the humanitarian consequences of a nuclear explosion. It should be noted that, in conformity with the verification regime proposed by the CTBT, Cameroon is on the

list of countries hosting a radionuclide station on its national territory, at latitude 4.2° north and longitude 9.3° east. Moreover, Cameroon should benefit from civil nuclear technology for development needs.

Conventional weapons, small arms and light weapons, anti-personnel mines, cluster munitions and explosive remnants of war continue to kill and mangle and to foment armed violence. The instruments created to deal with those weapons must be consolidated, universalized and effectively implemented.

Although the security challenges linked to disarmament are numerous and will continue to give rise to serious concerns all over the world as long as no suitable solutions are found, we believe that the successes in this area in just three years show that we can make progress in the disarmament and non-proliferation agenda when there is a constructive and pragmatic spirit. That dynamic also demonstrates that the quest for a safer world should be approached in a comprehensive manner and that efforts should be deployed in all areas: nuclear, chemical, biological, conventional, ballistic-missile proliferation and space.

Along those lines, this is an occasion to welcome the General Assembly's adoption on 2 April of the Arms Trade Treaty and to hope that that new legally binding instrument will enable the international community to effectively fight the illicit trade in those arms and to prevent their diversion, so as to contribute to international peace, security and stability, to avoid human suffering and to promote the cooperation, transparency and active assumption of responsibility on the part of State parties in the trade of such weapons.

Cameroon attaches great importance to multilateral efforts in the area of disarmament and has steadily supported all initiatives aimed at limiting nuclear arms and reducing nuclear proliferation.

With regard to chemical weapons, in the spirit of the African choice of a continent free of weapons of mass destruction and the policy of peaceful settlement of disputes, Cameroon supports the package of concerted diplomatic initiatives, including within the United Nations and in the Russian-American dialogue, among others, with a view to a definitive political solution to the Syrian crisis.

Furthermore, Cameroon has demonstrated its steady determination to contribute to the advent of a peaceful world, without, in particular, weapons of mass

destruction. It has done this again through its accession to the Biological Weapons Convention on 18 January 2013 and through its ratification, very soon, of the Central African Convention for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons, Their Ammunition and All Parts and Components That Can Be Used for Their Manufacture, Repair and Assembly — the Kinshasa Convention, which was unanimously adopted during the thirtieth ministerial meeting of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa.

My country is resolutely committed to the fight for disarmament and non-proliferation. It seems that the list of disarmament challenges to be dealt with gets longer over time, so it is essential and urgent to make progress in the responses to them.

We expect that the First Committee will be able to reflect the recent progress on various fronts. We hope that the discussions during this session will enable us to formulate appropriate responses to future challenges. The Chair can count on the support of my delegation in participating in the debate in that constructive spirit.

Mr. Moura (Portugal): Allow me at the outset to congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, on your election to chair the First Committee. I assure you of my delegation's full cooperation.

The statement delivered earlier by the observer of the European Union (see A/C.1/68/PV.3) fully reflects our national views, which will allow me to be brief and to focus on some items to which we attach special importance.

This year's adoption of the Arms Trade Treaty by the General Assembly is an important sign that multilateralism works and that the international community's actions can achieve significant and successful results through dialogue and negotiation. We must now work hard towards the Treaty's universalization and its early entry into force.

In this respect, Portugal wishes to draw attention to the issue of cluster munitions. Cluster munitions, as members know, affect military targets and the civilian population indiscriminately, continuing to make victims many years after the end of the conflicts in which they were used. Recent reports on the use of cluster munitions in Syria are very alarming and cast a gloomy shadow over the prospects of an already deeply embattled population. Portugal strongly condemns the

use of these weapons and urges all parties involved to refrain from their use.

For the past two years, along with Japan and Ghana, Portugal has worked hard to promote the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM). The CCM remains the only legally binding instrument governing the production, stockpiling, use and transfer of these weapons. Portugal remains committed to the CCM's effective implementation.

Like cluster munitions, landmines have long-lasting effects on the affected territories and populations. In 2014, 15 years after the entry into force of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, its State parties and observers will meet in Maputo to review what has been achieved on our path towards a mine-free world. We strongly believe that this goal is as important as it was when the world took the decision to ban the use of landmines. Everything that has been accomplished thus far should not only be praised but should also inspire us to go further. Portugal looks forward to participating in the Maputo summit and actively contributing to a new set of measurable and realistic — but nonetheless ambitious — commitments.

The agonizing impasse in the Conference on Disarmament (CD) threatens to turn that body into something completely irrelevant. Moreover, the fact that a significant number of States are barred from constructively participating in the decision-making process of the multilateral disarmament machinery only adds to that untenable situation. Portugal, along with several observer States to the CD, continues to call for the appointment of a special rapporteur to examine the modalities for enlarging the Conference. The seriousness of the issues we ought to be discussing there requires the attention of the international community as a whole.

Nuclear proliferation remains one of the most pressing issues that the international community has to tackle. We share the serious international concerns raised by the nuclear programmes of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, which must be fully addressed. Portugal urges both the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and Iran to abide by their international obligations, including resolutions adopted by the Security Council and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Board of Governors, and to take steps to build confidence among the parties, which is an essential element in negotiation.

In this regard, we welcome the recent round of talks between Iran and the E3+3 Governments and between Iran and the IAEA. However, words must be matched by deeds and atomic energy must be used strictly in accordance with the provisions of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

Portugal is deeply distraught over the use of chemical weapons in Syria. Those appalling attacks have met with the strongest condemnation and the appropriate response by the United Nations and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. It is now imperative to fully implement Security Council resolution 2118 (2013). Portugal calls on Syria to cooperate without reservation or delay and to provide all necessary conditions for the total elimination of its stock of these heinous weapons.

My delegation hopes that our deliberations in the forthcoming weeks will make progress towards meeting the goals of peace and security, which are common aims of all our peoples.

Mr. Ulibarri (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me to congratulate you, Mr. Chair, and the other members of the Bureau on your well-deserved election to lead the work of the First Committee. We also congratulate Ambassador Desra Percaya, Permanent Representative of Indonesia, and his team for their work during the previous session.

The most significant progress in disarmament, non-proliferation and weapons control in the past year has been the adoption of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) by an overwhelming majority of the General Assembly. Among other things, its adoption has given our Organization a renewed optimism about our own capacity to respond to humanity's greatest challenges. We have thus generated a healthy "spirit of New York", which we hope will lead to further successes.

But more important than this renewed spirit — and, in part, because of it — is that we now have the first-ever international treaty that establishes legally binding obligations for States to guarantee responsible, efficient and transparent controls for international transfers of conventional weapons, ammunition, parts and components. Finally, conventional arms trade will adhere to international human rights law and international humanitarian law and will comply with the conventions related to terrorism and organized crime, among other issues. Thus, the ATT will have

a real impact on the daily life of citizens and in the reduction of violence and armed conflict.

Costa Rica welcomes the fact that just four months after its adoption, 113 States have signed the ATT and seven have ratified it. We hope that this pace will continue and accelerate over the coming months. My country will not wait for the ATT to receive the 50 ratifications needed for its entry into force. By depositing our instrument on 25 September 2013, we announced our unwavering determination to unilaterally, voluntarily and immediately comply with and implement its obligations.

The spirit of New York that I mentioned earlier has also reached Lusaka, which hosted the fourth Meeting of States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM). There, the international community condemned the use of such weapons in Syria and reiterated its commitment to working towards their total elimination.

We will move that commitment forward in San José, our capital city, which will host the fifth Meeting of the States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions, in September 2014. There, we will continue to place human beings and humanitarian issues at the centre of our debates on weapons, with particular attention to the protection of civilians, prevention, assistance for victims and access to international cooperation in the Convention's implementation and in risk-reduction education. With a view to universalizing the Convention, Costa Rica invites the States in the region to follow the Tlatelolco model and convert Latin America and the Caribbean into a zone free of cluster munitions.

The situation faced by the civilian population in many current conflicts still requires the attention of the international community. Despite some progress, the reality on the ground continues to be characterized by the frequent breach by parties involved in conflict of their obligation to respect and protect civilians, as required by international humanitarian law and human rights.

Costa Rica expresses its concern at the humanitarian impact of the use of explosive weapons in densely populated areas, as noted by the Secretary-General in his 2012 report to the Security Council on the protection of civilians in armed conflict (S/2012/376). We also share the concern expressed in the same report regarding the use of unmanned aerial vehicles, or

drones, for launching targeted attacks with extremely destructive collateral effects.

Even more inhumane and indiscriminate is the use of chemical weapons against civilian populations, as has happened in Syria. In condemning that use and stressing the Government's responsibility in it, we express our hope that Syria's adherence to the Chemical Weapons Convention, Security Council resolution 2118 (2013), and the work the chemical-weapon inspectors in the field will effectively lead to the elimination of chemical weapons from that country.

In the midst of that process, we welcome the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. That serves as a reminder for those States that have yet to ratify the Convention or that have failed to comply with its obligations to do so without delay.

For Costa Rica, not only chemical weapons but all weapons of mass destruction are contrary to international humanitarian law. The best guarantee of security is the elimination of all weapons of mass destruction. From that position, Costa Rica actively participated in the international Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons, convened in Oslo in March by Norway. My country will participate with the same diligence in the next Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons, to be held in Mexico next year. We congratulate that country on leading the initiative in our region.

Costa Rica's commitment to general and complete disarmament was also demonstrated by our participation, at the presidential level, in the General Assembly's first High-level Meeting on Nuclear Disarmament (see A/68/PV.11). On that occasion, President Laura Chinchilla Miranda reaffirmed the need for the planet to again be a world free of nuclear arms, as it was prior to 1945.

To respond to that challenge, and considering the chronic paralysis of the Conference on Disarmament, the limited progress in the implementation of article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the threat of the use of nuclear arms in Asia, last year the General Assembly established the open-ended working group on taking forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations. Through our Permanent Representative in Geneva, Ambassador Manuel Dengo, we had the honour of presiding over the open-ended working group. The results of its work

represent a balance between differing positions on nuclear disarmament and provide guidelines on how to negotiate the subject in a multilateral manner. The high level of the debates and the constructive spirit in which States and civil society participated suggest that we can indeed reach agreement to begin negotiations towards the abolition of nuclear weapons.

In order to provide a full response at this juncture, the natural next steps should be the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty's entry into force and the start of negotiations on a legally binding international instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons. Malaysia and Costa Rica have proposed a model convention in that regard, which can serve as a basis to begin discussions.

Costa Rica is a small, democratic, disarmed and civilian country. The multilateral system and international law are our only instruments of defence. We believe that the principal tools for promoting and ensuring national and international security are the strengthening and perfection of democracy and promoting and respecting the rule of law.

Although we are a demilitarized nation, we are not unfamiliar with the legitimate concerns for security and defence that other countries may harbour, nor are we unaware of the need for many to incur military expenses that are justifiable in the light of criteria of proportionality and reason. What we question is excessive military expenditures, which can become a barrier to development and serve as a driver of conflict. For that reason, we insist on the need to move beyond stale security doctrines based on strictly military paradigms to those that are primarily founded on paradigms of development and human security.

Finally, in that regard, we reiterate that on balance, this past year has been genuinely positive. Much remains to be done, and it is up to us, the Member States, to support efforts and initiatives that will start the multilateral disarmament machinery moving.

Mr. Milanović (Serbia): At the outset, Mr. Chairman, I would like to congratulate you and other members of the Bureau on your election and to assure you of the full support of the Serbian delegation in the discharge of your important duties. On behalf of my delegation, I wish you every success.

It is our belief that we all strive to live in a more secure and peaceful world, despite all the challenges we face. Those challenges, such as the recent use of chemical

weapons in Syria, do not affect only the individuals of some countries; they affect the international community as a whole. It is our common responsibility to prevent incidents like that from happening in the years to come. We firmly believe that the role of the United Nations is crucial for an impartial investigation of such cases, and we strongly support the further decisive engagement of the United Nations in that regard.

Allow me to once again express the strong opposition of the Republic of Serbia to the use of chemical weapons, which is a serious violation of international law. As a State party to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction, we are in favour of their complete elimination. To that end, we welcome and fully support the adoption of Security Council resolution 2118 (2013), on chemical weapons in Syria, based on the decision of the Executive Council of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, of which my country is currently a member. That important resolution strongly expresses the position of the international community that the use of chemical weapons is unacceptable and constitutes a key step towards creating the possibilities for the safe and stable future of all citizens of Syria.

We consider extremely important Syria's accession to the Chemical Weapons Convention, believing that Syria has thus made a significant step towards the establishment of peace and the easing of tensions in the entire region. The Republic of Serbia expresses its hope that the elimination of chemical weapons in Syria will be followed by strong diplomatic efforts aimed at putting an end to violence and reaching a sustainable solution.

Regrettably, we still live in a world where nuclear weapons exist. Even with a considerable reduction in nuclear stocks, there is still a lot to be done in that field. The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) remains a vital instrument in strengthening international security and a cornerstone of non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament. As such, the NPT should be further enhanced by the full compliance of all State parties. The adoption of the comprehensive and forward-looking action plan in 2010 contributed to reaffirming the continued importance of the Treaty. The forthcoming new cycle of the NPT review process will be an opportunity to assess the practical achievements in the implementation of the action plan and define the ways to boost progress in

that regard. My country is committed to fulfilling all obligations it has assumed under the NPT, and in that regard it has implemented extensive legislative, regulatory and other measures at the national level.

Serbia is a strong advocate of the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, viewing it as another important international instrument for reaching the objectives of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. It also continues to attach great importance to the fulfilment of its obligations under Security Council resolution 1540 (2004). Serbia is one of the few Members of the United Nations and the first country in South-East Europe to adopt a national action plan for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004). Additionally, we hosted the first regional workshop on the implementation of resolution 1540 (2004). In April 2013 the Republic of Serbia became a full member of the Nuclear Suppliers Group — a prestigious international export control regime relating to the export of nuclear materials and dual-use goods.

Serbia has also acceded to all major international instruments in the field of combating and eradicating the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. We are in the process of adopting another set of legislative instruments — a law on the international restrictive measures, a law on the export and import of arms and military equipment, and a law on the export and import of dual-use goods — with the intention of modernizing the existing solutions in certain areas, fully aligning the changes with European Union legislation, and incorporating the new obligations arising from the Security Council resolutions and other international documents.

Along with other parties, Serbia continues to implement the agreement on subregional arms control that was adopted under article IV of the Dayton Peace Accord, and has made an immeasurable and distinct contribution to confidence- and security-building in our region. Belgrade will host the meeting of the subregional consultative commission at the end of this month.

Serbia welcomes the historical adoption of the Arms Trade Treaty, which will contribute to more responsible and transparent international arm transfers. Serbia signed the Treaty on 12 August, and we expect the ratification process to soon begin.

Serbia believes that productive multilateralism has an indispensable role to play in addressing challenges in the fields of disarmament and non-proliferation in an effective and sustainable manner. Regrettably, we are faced with a prolonged stalemate in the work of the multilateral disarmament machinery and in the negotiations on nuclear disarmament. We must remain committed to revitalizing multilateral negotiating bodies, in particular the Conference on Disarmament, in order to achieve concrete and effective measures that could contribute to positive results in this arena.

Furthermore, we hope that the States members of the Conference on Disarmament will finally consider another essential issue that is of particular interest to my country — the enlargement of the Conference. Every country should be given an opportunity to participate in future talks on the revitalization of the multilateral disarmament machinery and assume its share of responsibility. We all must demonstrate the clear political will to overcome the ongoing stalemate and engage seriously and without delay in substantive discussions on core issues on its agenda in order to make a credible contribution to international peace and security. Serbia stands ready to play a very active role in that regard.

Mr. Balé (Congo) (*spoke in French*): I am happy to see you, Mr. Chair, presiding over the Committee. I take this opportunity to congratulate you and the members of the Bureau on your election.

Our Committee's work is taking place following the High-level Meeting on Nuclear Disarmament, which was held on 26 September in New York (see A/68/PV.11) and which has once again sounded the alarm on the nuclear danger. The High-level Meeting gave rise to encouraging conclusions in the current context, contributing to raising greater awareness. At the same time, it reminded us that the nuclear-disarmament movement is a legitimate goal shared by all, as it helped to breathe life into the conclusions reached at the various review conferences of the parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, and also falls within the scope of that to be held in 2015. My delegation welcomes this positive development on the road towards nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and related materials poses a real threat to global peace and stability, and even to our very existence, if we

fail to take effective and robust measures to eliminate them. These days, the threat of the acquisition and use of such weapons by non-State actors, in particular terrorist groups, has exacerbated the threat. The link between the nuclear-proliferation regime and terrorism, which appears to be growing, encourages us to further strengthen universal mechanisms so that humankind may be spared the deadly repercussions of these weapons.

My country therefore supports all international efforts aimed at prohibiting the manufacture and use of nuclear weapons. We believe that the development of nuclear activities must strictly abide by internationally recognized norms and accord with the safeguards agreements of the International Agency Energy Agency regarding the use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes.

In that regard, my delegation welcomes Iran's commitment to embarking on a nuclear programme that is compatible with the expectations of the international community.

The creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones is part of this approach. That is why we must encourage further negotiations for the convening of a conference on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the sensitive region of the Middle East. In the same vein, the convening of the Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons in Mexico City in 2014 deserves our full support.

My country supports efforts at all levels to achieve the conclusion of an international treaty banning fissile materials of nuclear origin.

I take this opportunity to echo the concerns of my delegation concerning the prolonged deadlock in the Conference on Disarmament, which in our view is the ideal forum for multilateral disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation negotiations. The work of that body must be resumed in order to create an environment more conducive to negotiations on that important issue.

My delegation would like to share its concerns about the torpor witnessed in the dismantling of chemical weapons by States that are committed to doing so. Their recent use in the Syrian Arab Republic reflects the full measure of the horrific human consequences of such weapons and requires States possessing such chemical weapons to invest in their destruction. Furthermore, we call on those States have not yet done so to follow the

example of the Syrian Arab Republic, which recently acceded to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction.

We congratulate the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons on its recent winning of the Nobel Peace Prize. We understand the selection to be a just reward for the perseverance the institution has demonstrated in accomplishing its missions and an encouragement to pursue the total dismantlement of those deadly weapons.

Another subject of deep concern requiring similar attention is that of conventional weapons, which are more deadly and more frequently used in armed conflicts in the majority of developing countries, in particular small arms and light weapons, anti-personnel mines and cluster munitions. My delegation stresses the urgent need to adopt measures to spare the world the tragic consequences of the use of these weapons through the rigorous application of conventional disarmament mechanisms and instruments. In that regard, my delegation underscores the interest and the importance that we attach to the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, which is an essential tool to eradicate the proliferation and illicit trade in such weapons. The ratification by the Congo of the Central African Convention for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons, Their Ammunition and All Parts and Components That Can Be Used for Their Manufacture, Repair and Assembly, known as the Kinshasa Convention, is the political expression of our commitment to contribute to this collective effort.

The total elimination of anti-personnel mines on the planet is another challenge that the international community still faces. In that context, we encourage all efforts aimed at the universalization of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. We believe that, with cooperation among our countries, we will be able to achieve the United Nations objective of a mine-free world. We also encourage the international community's efforts to fight cluster munitions, and we subscribe to the various actions taken to promote and extend the Convention to that category of weapons.

In April, we were able to define common rules to regulate the uncontrolled trade in conventional

weapons, notwithstanding our disagreements on certain aspects of the Arms Trade Treaty. Its adoption gives us reason to hope that an irreversible option is possible in order to rise to the challenge that the end of the unregulated trade in conventional and conventional weapons represents. The time has come to translate our words into actions. To that end, we need to accelerate the entry into force of that invaluable instrument.

My delegation attaches great importance to my country's signing on 25 September of that instrument, echoing the calls of our peoples, who are often the victims of irresponsible arms transfers. The hope raised by the Treaty is undeniable, and can be gauged by the large number of signatures it has received in such a short time.

Finally, I note that disarmament, to which our First Committee devotes its annual agenda, is one of the cornerstones of building the safer world that we all wish to shape and that we hope to see governed according to the principles of peace, cooperation and prosperity for all. Let us strive to that end.

Mr. Avirovikj (former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia): I would like to congratulate you, Sir, and other members of the Bureau on your election to head the work of the First Committee. I assure you of the support and cooperation of my delegation.

The Republic of Macedonia fully aligns itself with the statement made by the observer of the European Union.

After many years of inclusive negotiations, this year the General Assembly adopted the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), a milestone in the work of the United Nations. The Treaty, which envisages regulating international trade in conventional arms, will prevent those weapons from being used to threaten security, destabilize regions, violate international human rights and humanitarian law, and undermine economic and social development, and will thereby reduce human suffering and enhance human security.

Mr. Luque Márquez (Ecuador), Vice-Chair, took the chair.

The Republic of Macedonia has been a strong supporter of the adoption of a legally binding international instrument establishing the highest common standards for the import, export and transfer of conventional weapons. My country is a signatory

State of the ATT, which will soon be submitted to the Macedonian Parliament for ratification.

The Republic of Macedonia welcomes the launching of the Secretary-General's investigation into the latest use of chemical weapons in Syria. The report of the United Nations Mission to Investigate Allegations of the Use of Chemical Weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic on the alleged use of chemical weapons in the Ghouta area of Damascus on 21 August 2013 (A/67/997) and the adoption of the Security Council resolution 2118 (2013) on the destruction of Syria's chemical weapons represent an important achievement as a unified international response to the Syrian crisis, and serve as a signal that the international community will not allow the use of weapons of mass destruction.

Multilateralism remains the best approach to security, including disarmament and non-proliferation. It is the best way to secure international peace and ensure human security. The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) remains the cornerstone of the global nuclear non-proliferation regime and an essential nuclear-disarmament tool. The States parties to the NPT must fully comply with its provisions; otherwise they will seriously undermine non-proliferation and disarmament efforts. The universality of the NPT is of great importance. We continue to voice our expectation that the States that are not party to the Treaty will join as non-nuclear-weapon States and, pending their accession, adhere to its terms and pledge their commitment to non-proliferation and disarmament.

Another crucial document in this area is the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. States should pursue its early entry into force and its universalization. The immediate launch of negotiations at the Conference on Disarmament of a treaty banning the production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices is of equal importance. In that context, let me underline the importance of our renewed commitment to upholding, implementing and strengthening the multilateral disarmament and non-proliferation treaties and agreements, as well as initiatives developed to complement them. Much remains to be done to strengthen nuclear security, to prevent nuclear accidents and to prevent unauthorized access to nuclear radiological materials or weapons. In that difficult process, we fully support initiatives to strengthen the International Atomic Energy Agency and its capacity to address the challenge of nuclear safety.

Let me conclude by saying that a nuclear-weapon-free world is viable. It requires efforts on the part of many stakeholders, including first and foremost the nuclear States, but our collective effort and the strong voice of civil society are no less important.

Mr. Kmentt (Austria): As this is the first time that I am taking the floor, I would also like to congratulate you, Sir, and the other members of the Bureau on your election and to assure you of Austria's full support.

Austria aligns itself fully with the general statement made by the observer of the European Union (see A/C.1/68/PV.3). We would like to add the following comments from a national perspective.

At this year's session of the General Assembly, we can look back to a year of momentous developments in the field of disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation. Some developments are encouraging; others are deeply disconcerting. Among the negative developments is the continued build-up of nuclear weapons and missiles capabilities by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, culminating in a third nuclear test in February. Austria strongly condemns this test and other provocative actions, and urges the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to change its course of action. We also remain seriously concerned about the Iranian nuclear issue. We hope that the new Government in Tehran will follow through on the recent positive signals in a way that addresses all the concerns of the international community as regards the nature of its nuclear programme.

The most troubling development this year, however, was the use of chemical weapons in Syria. Austria categorically condemns that unacceptable violation of international law and international humanitarian law. While nothing will undo this indiscriminate killing of civilians with weapons of mass destruction, we must focus our resolve that such actions cannot be repeated in the future. We hope that the agreed process for the destruction of chemical weapons will proceed swiftly, and that the international norm enshrined in the Chemical Weapons Convention will emerge strengthened as a result of the tragedy. In that context, we welcome the decision to award this year's Nobel Peace Prize to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. It underscores the crucial importance of the comprehensive prohibition and full destruction of weapons of mass destruction through a multilateral arrangement.

In Austria's view, the recent use of chemical weapons and the profound international outcry that followed should be reason enough to reflect more broadly on the place of weapons of mass destruction in the twenty-first century. While the entire international community rightly underscored that there is no scenario in which the use of chemical weapons could be justifiable, we also need to think that through to the end.

As devastating as the effects of chemical weapons are, they are dwarfed by the consequences that the use of nuclear weapons would occasion. Those weapons of mass destruction are still considered by some States to be legitimate and the ultimate guarantors of security. In our view, the inconsistency is obvious and the conclusion clear — all weapons of mass destruction, in particular nuclear weapons, are relics of the past that cannot be reconciled with today's understanding of international law and international humanitarian law. They should have no place in the twenty-first century, and we need to redouble our efforts to create a world without nuclear weapons or any other weapons of mass destruction.

We are therefore pleased that the discourse about nuclear weapons has shifted. The increased focus on their humanitarian consequences is long overdue. As long as nuclear weapons exist, the risk of their use by design, miscalculation, accident or madness remains real. Any use of nuclear weapons would cause unthinkable humanitarian emergencies and have catastrophic global consequences on the environment, climate, health, social order, human development and the economy. Austria was pleased to participate in the international conference held on this matter in Norway earlier this year, and we look forward to next year's follow-up conference in Mexico and to continuing and deepening this important discourse.

Austria remains fully committed to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), which has served us well over the past four decades. But we must recognize that its credibility is seriously challenged. It is challenged as an effective means to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons; it is challenged as a credible framework to achieve nuclear disarmament; and, without universality, it is challenged as a security and confidence-building instrument at the regional level. The universal goals that underpin the NPT will be achieved only if all of those challenges are addressed with urgency.

Austria has always supported the most stringent non-proliferation rules. However, the focus on proliferation is not sufficient. As long as some States regard nuclear weapons as a legitimate security hedge for themselves, efforts to counter nuclear proliferation will always suffer from a fundamental contradiction and a credibility deficit. Both the possession of nuclear weapons and the reliance on nuclear deterrence are, in our view, drivers for proliferation. The conclusion is clear — nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation efforts can be successful only if undertaken together.

The action plan agreed to at the 2010 Review Conference underscores that urgency and would, if implemented credibly, put us on the right track to achieving nuclear disarmament and to preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons. Less than two years from the 2015 Review Conference, we are concerned about the limited progress in the implementation of the action plan. Our concerns relate to, among other things, the progress towards the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, the continued dysfunction of the Conference on Disarmament and, in particular, plans for massive long-term investments in the modernization of nuclear weapons by several nuclear-weapon States. These are, in our view, not consistent with taking credible steps away from reliance on nuclear weapons, which we see as key elements of the NPT disarmament agreements of 1995, 2000 and 2010. In this context, we welcome President Obama's recent pledge in Berlin to move beyond Cold War nuclear postures, and we hope that such steps are taken with urgency before the next NPT Review Conference.

In 2010, the NPT Review Conference resolved that all States parties must commit to pursuing policies that are fully compatible with the Treaty and the objective of achieving a world without nuclear weapons. This was Action 1 of the conclusions and recommendations for follow-on actions. That key outcome of the 2010 Review Conference underscores that the implementation of all provisions of the NPT, including article VI, is the collective responsibility of the entire NPT membership.

Several initiatives have been launched as a consequence of non-nuclear-weapon States' commitment to facilitating a more focused implementation of our collective responsibilities. One of these initiatives was last year's resolution 67/56, which established the open-ended working group on taking forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations. The Working Group recently concluded its work in Geneva

with the adoption by consensus of a substantive report reflecting the discussions held and all proposals made. In our view, one of the most significant aspects of the work of the Group was the move beyond a discussion of approaches. It addressed the substantive elements that would be required for the achievement and maintenance of a world without nuclear weapons. The discussions were substantive, interesting, engaged, constructive, non-confrontational and focused on assessing the various options.

But beyond the substance, the Group also gave an opportunity to conduct these discussions in a more twenty-first-century way, open to all interested States and more interactive, with excellent contributions from experts and civil society organizations. This kind of discussion has been missing in multilateral forums in recent years and is clearly required to achieve progress in taking forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations. A draft resolution will be introduced at this session to follow up on this matter.

Austria was very satisfied with the successful conclusion of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT). It was without a doubt one of the key positive developments of the past year and an important sign of life of multilateral diplomacy in the arms-control area. The role of civil society in this success cannot be valued highly enough, and the more inclusive and open negotiation process in the General Assembly also facilitated rather than impeded progress. It is now important to achieve entry into force as soon as possible. Austria has already signed the ATT, and we plan to submit the Treaty for ratification to the Austrian Parliament in the next few months.

The protection of civilians in armed conflict and strengthening international humanitarian law have long been Austrian priorities. Humanitarian disarmament instruments, such as the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention and the Convention on Cluster Munitions, have played a crucial role in strengthening the normative framework for the protection of civilians through the prevention of further loss of life and collective efforts for remedial measures. We call on all States that have not yet done so to join those important treaties.

The prevention of and accountability for the deliberate targeting of civilians during war, as well as disproportionate collateral casualties as a result of military action, are at the centre of our concern. Today, arms technology is undergoing rapid changes. The use

of armed drones in conflict situations is increasing. In the not-too-distant future, fully autonomous weapons systems could become available. As a result, the implications of these developments for international humanitarian law require urgent engagement by the relevant United Nations forums and further discussion with a view to ensuring that such weapons will not be used in a way that violates universally recognized principles of international humanitarian law, such as the proportionality of the use of force or the obligation to distinguish between civilians and combatants.

We remain greatly concerned at the humanitarian impact of the use of explosive weapons in densely populated areas. We take note of the view expressed by the International Committee of the Red Cross that the use of explosive weapons with a wide-impact area must be avoided in densely populated areas. We welcome the call of the Secretary-General to the Security Council and Member States to recognize and act on this critical issue.

Let me close by reiterating Austria's strong commitment to multilateral cooperation in the field of disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation.

Mr. Nazarian (Armenia): At the outset, I wish to join previous speakers in congratulating the Chair and the other members of the Bureau upon their election to guide the work of the Committee. I also express my delegation's readiness to work with the Chair and pledge our firm support towards achieving the ambitious goals ahead of us at this session.

Recent years have clearly demonstrated the complexity of contemporary conflicts and the challenges involved in mounting coherent and effective international responses. In this perspective, Armenia attaches great importance to disarmament and, in particular, to the efforts of the United Nations aimed at establishing international and regional security, stability and an atmosphere of confidence. We consider these efforts and initiatives to be essential measures to contain international and regional threats and manage instability.

Arms control, the reduction of armaments and ultimately disarmament play a fundamental role in the prevention of conflicts and their management, and lead to confidence-building and security at the regional and global levels. Thus, the unconditional implementation and further strengthening of the existing disarmament and non-proliferation agreements and international

verification mechanisms and institutions should become a priority for the international community.

Armenia acknowledges the paramount importance of inter-State cooperation in the field of security and non-proliferation, and affirms its resolve to actively combat the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction in all their aspects. Just three weeks ago, in Yerevan, a national round table to discuss the implementation of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) and Armenia's national implementation action plan was organized by the Government of Armenia and the Conflict Prevention Centre of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), in cooperation with the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. The roundtable focused on the evaluation of the resolution's implementation and its role in the general process of security, disarmament and non-proliferation.

The Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe is a pillar of the European security architecture. The Treaty played a key role in bringing the quantity of military equipment to a remarkably low level and eventually created an unprecedented culture of arms control through its information exchange and verification mechanisms. Unfortunately, the Convention has recently experienced serious implementation problems. It is obvious that the new security environment in Europe needs a thorough reassessment, to be followed by the putting in place of a functional conventional arms-control regime. No doubt, it should inherit certain components of the existing regime that have proven their viability.

More than a decade has passed since the adoption 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. As it is the only global instrument in that field, it reflects the shared understanding of the common responsibility and commitment to stopping the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, which still constitutes a huge impediment to peace and security, growth, development and safety in the world. We consider that international instrument to be the key universal starting point to respond to the challenges posed by the illicit trade in and excessive accumulation of small arms and light weapons at the national, regional and global levels.

As it advocates the strengthening of international humanitarian law and is fully supportive of its humanitarian goals, Armenia regards the Convention

on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) and the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention as important international instruments to achieve the goal of eradicating an entire category of excessively injurious conventional weapons. It has always been our conviction that the human and social costs of the use of anti-personnel mines, booby traps and other explosive devices far outweigh their military significance.

Moreover, while not a State party, Armenia implements, on a voluntary basis, articles 11 and 13 of Amended Protocol II to the CCW and presents annual information in the format of the OSCE questionnaire on anti-personnel mines to the OSCE Conflict Prevention Centre. Given the particular security problems in our region, Armenia is ready to consider joining the aforementioned Conventions if the principle of simultaneous accession by all States of the region is applied.

Let me conclude by stressing once again the importance of continuous efforts to further improve and expand the international treaty system in the field of conventional weapons. Armenia remains fully committed to its international obligations on arms control and disarmament. We believe that additional political will needs to be generated for the effective implementation of the relevant United Nations instruments. That will unquestionably contribute to enhancing trust, building confidence and promoting regional dialogue and cooperation.

Mr. Zinsou (Benin) (*spoke in French*): I congratulate the Chair of the First Committee on his election and assure him of my delegation's cooperation and support for the success of our work, which is, needless to say, of crucial importance to peace and security — the essential conditions for development. I also congratulate the other members of the Bureau.

Benin aligns itself with the statements made by the representatives of Indonesia on behalf of Non-Aligned Movement and Nigeria on behalf of the Group of African States (see A/C.1/68/PV3).

The threat posed to the world by the illicit circulation of small arms and light weapons and the possession, development and proliferation of nuclear weapons is an obvious and real challenge to us all. With respect to weapons of mass destruction, it should be noted that human error due to improper handling, accidents and other natural disasters can arise at any moment and have immeasurable consequences that would sweep

away both those who possess those horrible weapons and innocent people, who are sometimes unaware of the existence of such weapons and of the serious danger they pose to humankind as a whole.

We need to push the largest nuclear Powers to intensify their bilateral efforts to limit and reduce their nuclear-weapon stockpiles. I welcome in this respect the agreements reached by the United States and the Russian Federation to reduce strategic offensive arsenals. We request them to go further on the path to nuclear disarmament, as controls are not enough to deal with the threat posed by the very existence of these weapons. The convening of a summit between the United States and the Russian Federation is, in this regard, a step in the right direction and would encourage the will to move towards the zero option, which is synonymous with a world free of weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons.

However, as useful as bilateral commitments to the limitation and reduction of nuclear stockpiles can be, the world will be truly safe only if bold multilateral actions are taken to define the principles that everyone will need to follow. Multilateral efforts must be inclusive and identify all the risks of the harmful use of such weapons. It is important that the bodies set up to facilitate multilateral cooperation correctly assess the challenges and their responsibility in this respect.

In this respect, Benin is concerned by the problems in the United Nations Disarmament Commission, which, despite some limited progress at the end of its most recent substantive session, remains unable to achieve the expected breakthroughs on substantive issues. The situation is in many respects the same in the Conference on Disarmament, whose work is stalled and stymied despite the urgency of the issues before it. It is deadlocked because of the rule of consensus that the Conference has imposed on itself. Benin sincerely hopes that political will will prevail so that these two essential components of the United Nations disarmament machinery can regain their former lustre and honour their mandates.

Benin reaffirms the importance and usefulness to humankind of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. In addition to the detection of nuclear explosions, to which it is primarily devoted, the system that it establishes allows for the provision of seismic and hydroacoustic data that could help improve early-warning systems for tsunamis and other similar

natural disasters in various areas around the world. We welcome the declaration adopted on 27 September at the conclusion of the Conference on Facilitating Entry into Force of the Treaty, and we support its full implementation. We urge annex 2 States to proceed without further delay to its signature and ratification in order to allow humankind to reap the benefits of this important instrument.

Benin welcomes initiatives to support the implementation of the outcome of the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, which reached important decisions for ensuring nuclear non-proliferation. Among those initiatives, I highlight the very timely efforts by non-governmental organizations and civil society in the fight against nuclear weapons.

The failure to convene the international conference on the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons in the Middle East, provided for by the 2010 Review Conference, poses a real credibility problem for the international community. Benin therefore reiterates an urgent appeal for the consistent implementation of the decision, which would undoubtedly represent a big step towards achieving a nuclear-weapon-free world.

In any case, Africa is firmly committed to a world free from nuclear weapons, as evidenced by the signature and entry into force of the Treaty of Pelindaba, which is the pride of a continent that is deeply committed to the promotion of nuclear energy for all for peaceful purposes and under the strict, total and unconditional control of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Benin supports initiatives for the realization of a world free of weapons of mass destruction, welcomes the agreement on the destruction of Syria's chemical arsenal and welcomes that country's accession to the Convention on Chemical Weapons. We welcome the Security Council's adoption of resolution 2118 (2013), whereby it has implicitly become the guarantor of chemical disarmament.

Benin reiterates its support for the road map to a safer world contained in the declaration by the Non-Aligned Movement and strongly supported by the African Group countries. The road map includes the early commencement of negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament on a comprehensive convention on nuclear weapons with a view to banning their possession, development, production, acquisition, control, storage,

transfer, use or threat of use and their destruction; the designation of 26 September as the international day to renew our commitment to the total elimination of nuclear weapons; and the convening in 2018 of a high-level conference on nuclear disarmament to assess the progress achieved and the best road to follow in the future.

I conclude by once again welcoming the adoption and signature of the Arms Trade Treaty by an already impressive number of countries, including Benin. The peoples of the African continent are very pleased with that adoption, as they continue to suffer the consequences of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. Given the number of those who fall victim to them every day, such weapons have become veritable weapons of mass destruction. Benin is taking the necessary steps for the Treaty's ratification in order for it to enter into force as soon as possible.

Mr. Lima (Cabo Verde): At the outset, allow me to extend my heartfelt congratulations to the Chair of the First Committee and to other Bureau members on their election to lead this important Committee. Allow me to also thank the Chair's predecessor, Mr. Desra Percaya, for his excellent work and leadership during the previous session of the First Committee. I would like to assure the Chair of my delegation's support throughout the current session. We are confident that the First Committee will successfully complete its deliberations under his leadership.

Cabo Verde aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Nigeria on behalf of the Group of African States. However, let me also add the following remarks in my national capacity.

We believe that successful multilateralism and international cooperation are crucial to achieving the goals set out for disarmament and international security agenda items. Cabo Verde remains committed to international peace and security as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, and we support all legal instruments and mechanisms related to the above-mentioned goals.

We congratulate the General Assembly on its initiative to convene the first High-level Meeting on Nuclear Disarmament (see A/68/PV.11), which took place on 26 September at United Nations Headquarters, as a positive signal strengthening the international community's dialogue and framework in this field.

Another landmark was the adoption on 2 April of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), which Cabo Verde voted in favour of. That important Treaty, if widely signed by Member States and fully implemented, will lead to the effective regulation of the arms trade and have significant impacts on armed conflicts, in particular in my continent, Africa. Regional organizations have a vital role to play in this regard. We believe that the ATT will provide a basis for discouraging terrorism, urban violence and insecurity, as well as drug trafficking activities and related international organized crime.

According to the report of the Economic Community of West African States Small Arms Control Programme, national surveys on small arms point to associated factors, such as linkages with drugs, as aiding the illicit circulation of weapons across borders. It points out that the increasing sophistication of local manufacturers continues to be revealed at crime scenes and poses a great danger to the West African region.

Cabo Verde, which is a small island developing State, is at the crossroads of transatlantic drug-trafficking networks due to its strategic location. We are firmly engaged at the national, regional and international levels in combating this universal plague. Our State is putting much of its meagre resources into this common duty — resources that we could use for health, agriculture or other priority issues in my country. Furthermore, we have been undertaking measures with a view to strengthening national legislation and mechanisms to better control and regulate conventional arms. We therefore welcome the commitments undertaken pursuant to the Arms Trade Treaty.

According to statistics, there are still more than 20,000 nuclear warheads in the world, which, if used, could destroy civilizations and the majority of Earth's lifeforms. The impact of the use of those weapons would be colossal for humankind and the global environment and would contribute to the negative effects of climate change. We strongly condemn all nuclear tests, and as an island State Cabo Verde rejects all nuclear tests in oceans or high seas, which have an impact on marine biodiversity and ecosystems. The use of nuclear weapons certainly will hamper the achievement of the sustainable development goals.

My country welcomes Mexico's announcement that it will host the next Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons, to be held February 2014,

and looks forward to contributing to its deliberations. Cabo Verde, a non-nuclear-weapon State, firmly defends its rejection of the use of nuclear weapons in all their forms. In addition, Cabo Verde supports the universality of all treaties that are linked to the disarmament machinery.

We consider Security Council resolution 2118 (2013), adopted in September by consensus, to be a cornerstone of the prohibition of the use of chemical weapons in the future. The use of such weapons of mass destruction constitutes a violation of human rights as well as a threat to regional and international peace and security.

Cabo Verde, as a member of the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone, supports not only a Middle East nuclear-weapon-free zone but the world as a nuclear-weapon-free zone. We regret that the conference on that issue has been postponed.

As a State party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, Cabo Verde recognizes the importance of its review processes and urges other non-State parties to endorse it in order to prevent the horizontal and vertical proliferation of nuclear weapons, for the benefit of international security. We are firmly engaged with international forums aiming to achieve the reduction of weapons of mass destruction.

In 2008, Cabo Verde endorsed the Convention on Cluster Munitions and has taken part in the international dialogue to further undertake decisions and measures in order to complete its obligations.

I would like to conclude by quoting from a speech delivered in 1953 by United States President Dwight D. Eisenhower:

“Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired signifies, in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed. This world in arms is not spending money alone. It is spending the sweat of its labourers, the genius of its scientists, the hopes of its children. This is not a way of life at all, in any true sense. Under the clouds of war, it is humanity hanging from a cross of iron.”

We in Cabo Verde are convinced that we cannot set a constructive post-2015 development agenda without

building ways for peacemaking. Let us underpin the pillars to bring peace and security to all.

Mr. Medina (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): As this is the first occasion on which I have taken the floor, I take this opportunity to congratulate the Chair on his election to lead the First Committee, and to extend my congratulations to the newly elected members of the Bureau. The Bureau can count on Peru's support and commitment in their work.

My delegation aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (see A/C.1/68/PV.3) and by the representative of Cuba on behalf of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (see A/C.1/68/PV.4).

I would like first to address those weapons that, in practice, are considered to be the most dangerous and that cause the greatest damage to humankind. The proliferation of small arms and light weapons poses a serious challenge to Governments, not only in developing countries but also in developed countries. In the case of developing countries, the destabilizing effects of the illicit use of those weapons are notorious. They have contributed to increasing armed violence, and are used on a daily basis not only in ordinary crimes, but also in transnational organized crime, particularly in connection with the illicit trafficking in drugs.

That has been the case in my country, which has been linked to the remnants of terrorism that ravaged our country for almost two decades. Resolved to address the situation, Peru has strengthened its national response capacity through the recent establishment of a national authority to control security services, arms, munitions and explosives in civilian use. At the external level, my country is party to the international non-proliferation arms control, disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation regimes. At the Andean subregional level, we are in the process of implementing the Andean Plan to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. At the continental level, we are party to the Inter-American Convention on Transparency in Conventional Weapons Acquisitions and to the Inter-American Convention Against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives and Other Related Materials.

Pursuant to the aim of achieving the effective control of arms and their munitions and ammunitions, on 24 September Peru signed the Arms Trade Treaty,

a text adopted following a negotiating process in which my delegation participated actively. My country attaches particular importance to that instrument, which seeks to regulate the international trade in small arms and light weapons, munitions, ammunitions and explosives, as we consider it to be a useful instrument for peoples seeking development in an environment of peace and security.

We believe that the efforts of the international community should not stop at the adoption of the Treaty. We call for its prompt entry into force. In that regard, we call on all States, and arms-exporting countries in particular, to sign and ratify the Arms Trade Treaty to ensure its prompt entry into force and its universalization.

The adoption of a final document at the Second United Nations Conference to Review Progress Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects sent a positive signal in the area of disarmament, in spite of the fact that it did not include references to munitions, ammunitions, parts and components, or to the diversion of weapons or to cross-border trade. We reiterate our long-standing commitment to the effective implementation of the Programme of Action, and we will work with all Member States during the upcoming cycle as regards the 2018 Review Conference.

Nuclear disarmament and the non-proliferation of arms are further matters of great interest to my country. Beyond restating our commitment to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and to the Treaty of Tlatelolco, which established the first nuclear-weapon-free zone in Latin America and the Caribbean, my delegation takes this opportunity to echo the call on all States that are not yet party to the NPT to immediately accede to it without restrictions. While we support all initiatives aimed at preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons, we reiterate our call on nuclear-weapon States, whether declared or not, to progress towards effective and verifiable elimination of their nuclear weapons.

In regard to the preparatory work for 2015 NPT Review Conference, Peru remains fully committed to the third session of the Preparatory Committee to be held in 2014, which we will be honoured to chair. We hope to achieve substantive progress in preparation for the 2015 Review Conference. In the same vein, Peru

advocates the universalization of regimes aimed at prohibiting the use of weapons of mass destruction.

In that context, we welcome the recent adherence of the Syrian Arab Republic to the Chemical Weapons Convention, which is very close to universalization. We also acknowledge the outstanding work accomplished by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, which was recently awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

I must also briefly refer to the disarmament machinery. My delegation succumbs to optimism and is pleased to see the establishment of the Informal Working Group on the Comprehensive Programme of Disarmament, which mandated to develop a substantive agenda for the Conference on Disarmament. We look forward to the reactivation of the Conference to enable it to resume its role as the negotiating body par excellence in matters of international disarmament and security.

Peru is convinced that, via confidence-building measures, States will be able to move towards the integration and strengthening of mechanisms and cooperative actions that will enable us to address extreme poverty, inequality and social exclusion on an urgent basis — hence the importance of continuing to promote at all levels an environment conducive to arms control, the limitation of conventional weapons and non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, which will allow all States to devote a greater part of their natural resources to their own economic and social development, taking into account the obligation to meet their international commitments and their legitimate needs for self-defence and security.

I should like to briefly note the work of the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, whose main office is in my country. I wish to highlight the important supporting role that it plays by contributing alongside the States of the region to a range of disarmament activities and confidence-building measures and to the fight against illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons, ammunition and explosives, which pose a grave threat to public safety in the region.

Finally, I reaffirm Peru's unwavering support for disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control. We pledge to devote our efforts to the work of this Committee, because we are convinced that its achievements will contribute to strengthening international peace and security.

Ms. Urruela Arenales (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, we should like to congratulate the Chair and the other members of the Bureau on their recent election to guide the work of the First Committee. I assure them of my delegation's full cooperation in the good development of the work of the Committee.

We take this opportunity to congratulate the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons on being awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, and commend the work of that organization to free the world from those inhuman weapons.

We align ourselves with the statements made by the representatives of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (see A/C.1/68/PV.3), and of Cuba on behalf of the States members of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (see A/C.1/68/PV.4). However, we would like to make a few remarks on the subject in our national capacity.

We join the immense majority of Member States in welcoming the recent adoption of the Arms Trade Treaty, which already has 113 signatories and seven ratifications. Its adoption was no less than a historic event and a watershed in international diplomacy. Guatemala is a firm supporter of the Arms Trade Treaty. We are encouraged by the fact that the international community has approved a legally binding instrument that seeks to significantly reduce the proliferation of weapons worldwide, prevent arms traders from taking advantage of the weakest point in the legal arms supply chain to divert such weapons to the illegal market, and define the responsibilities of every actor that participates in that chain. We must now continue to struggle to ensure that this instrument enters into force as soon as possible.

We would have liked for the Treaty to include greater coverage of ammunition and its parts and components. Nonetheless, we have no doubt that the Treaty has the potential to make a real difference, and that once it enters into force, it will ensure that exporting, importing and transit countries work under a single set of norms. It will be an important tool in the fight to eradicate the illicit arms market.

It was therefore a great honour for my country to sign the Arms Trade Treaty on 24 June. We take this opportunity to reiterate our commitment to making every possible effort to finalize the internal process that accompanies ratification in order to contribute to the final goal of its prompt entry into force. Only

in that way will we fulfil the mandate we received from the General Assembly and the expectations of the international community. We must not permit any loss of the momentum that led to the Treaty's adoption, because we owe it to the thousands of victims of armed violence to ensure the implementation of this instrument in order to put a halt to that scourge and thereby advance towards our shared goal of maintaining international peace and security. We therefore call upon all States to adhere to the Treaty and ratify it without delay.

The fight against arms trafficking is one of the top priorities of our Government. In our region, the illicit arms traffic is fueled by social inequality, the lack of socioeconomic opportunities, the inability of Governments to guarantee the rule of law, the growing presence of narcotics trafficking and the existence of transnational organized crime — factors that also negatively impact development and civic security. The problem transcends national boundaries, countries and regions; it is also an issue that cuts across almost all the work of the General Assembly and the Security Council.

Although the topic of small arms and light weapons is taken up more fully in the General Assembly, it is important to recognize and value the complementary role that other United Nations forums can play. In that light, we welcome the recent adoption of resolution 2117 (2013), the first Security Council resolution specifically devoted to the theme of small arms and light weapons. It recognizes not only the responsibility of States to protect their civilian populations from the devastating effects of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, and the link between them and the exacerbation of sexual and gender-based violence, but also the significance of the adoption of the Arms Trade Treaty.

My delegation stresses the importance of fully implementing 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 follow-up mechanisms, and we commend the success of the last Review Conference.

While we celebrate a year rich in events and successes in the realm of conventional arms, we regret not being able to express equal optimism with respect to nuclear weapons. In the current context of international peace and security, it is more urgent than ever to achieve concrete progress in our struggle for

nuclear disarmament, which, as my delegation has said before, is the final goal to which we must all aspire and the only sane route to a safer world.

Guatemala neither possesses nor intends to possess such weapons and believes that their very existence poses an unacceptable risk for humankind. We therefore support all initiatives aimed at their total elimination. In that regard, we welcome the Second Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons, to be held next year in Mexico, as follow-up to this year's meeting in Norway and the High-level Meeting on Nuclear Disarmament that took place on 26 September (see A/68/PV.11).

We also believe that all endeavours in that area should give equal weight to the three pillars of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons — nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy — as they are intimately connected and mutually reinforcing. Likewise, as a State party to the Treaty, we are committed to promoting its universality and to complying fully with each of its provisions. Compliance is a legal obligation of all States parties, which must give clear evidence of their adherence in letter and spirit to that international legal instrument.

Nuclear-weapon-free zones are an essential component of nuclear disarmament. Guatemala is proud to be a party to the Treaty of Tlatelolco, which established the first inhabited nuclear-weapon-free zone on the planet and served as an example and inspiration for the creation of other denuclearized areas.

Having achieved the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Latin America and the Caribbean, it is essential to ensure that it not be subject to nuclear threats. In that sense, we regret that it has not been possible to hold the conference on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, and we urge all interested States to redouble their efforts to ensure that it is convened as soon as possible.

Likewise, we consider it crucial to maintain the moratorium on nuclear testing until the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. We take this opportunity to reiterate our country's support for the Treaty, which we ratified on 12 January 2012, while also calling on all those countries that have not yet done so — especially annex 2 countries, without whose adherence it cannot enter into force — to sign and ratify that important instrument.

Guatemala is committed to the complete elimination of all weapons of mass destruction and roundly condemns their use. We cannot fail to express our consternation over the attack in Syria on 21 August, which revealed the urgent need for universal adherence by all States to the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological Weapons Convention, as well as the importance of the full compliance of all States with all their provisions and requirements. We therefore welcome Syria's recent adherence to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction.

Mr. Le Hoai Trung (Viet Nam): At the outset, allow me, on behalf of the delegation of Viet Nam, to express our warm congratulations to the Chair and the other members of the Bureau of the Committee on their election.

Viet Nam aligns itself with the statement made by Ambassador Desra Percaya of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (see A/C.1/68/PV.3), and the statement made by Ambassador U Maung Wai of Myanmar on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (see A/C.1/68/PV.5).

Conflicts and the accompanying inhumane use of weapons are still raging across regions, including the use of chemical weapons in August, which was widely condemned. It is our collective responsibility to address those issues, given the fact that major multilateral negotiations related to disarmament continue to fail to overcome the current impasse. There is room for cautious hope for future successes thanks to well-grounded reasons, including the High-level Meeting of the General Assembly on Nuclear Disarmament (see A/68/PV.11). It is, however, a long way to go from these first-step achievements to the long-overdue compliance with all disarmament instruments.

Viet Nam's foreign policy is one of peace and disarmament. It is our conviction, shaped by decades of war and human suffering, that disarmament must be complete and general and implemented in a balanced and comprehensive manner, with the highest priorities attached to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. It must be reiterated that the three pillars of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) — nuclear disarmament, nuclear non-proliferation and the peaceful use of nuclear technologies — must be moved forward in a

balanced manner. As there is only one more session of the Preparatory Committee in 2014 before the 2015 Review Conference, it is of utmost importance that every party concerned accelerate efforts to fulfil its obligations under the 2010 action plan.

We commend the continued role of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in providing technical assistance to States in pursuit of the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. Viet Nam has closely cooperated with the IAEA in ensuring nuclear safety and security in the development of nuclear-power infrastructure in Viet Nam. We will make every effort to fulfill our responsibilities as the Chairman of the Board of Governors of the IAEA for the term 2013-2014.

We would like to stress that nuclear disarmament is our ultimate collective goal. In that regard, the High-level Meeting on Nuclear Disarmament convened in September was significant in stepping up momentum, which could be further advanced by the steps set out in the draft resolution that the Non-Aligned Movement shall submit to the Committee. A number of outstanding issues remain to be addressed, including the initiation of consultations on a nuclear-disarmament convention, the negotiation of a legally binding instrument on negative security assurances, and the substantive negotiation of a fissile-material treaty. Pending the resolution of those issues, it is critical to bring into force existing international instruments, especially the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. We therefore call on those States that have not yet done so to sign and ratify the Treaty at an early date.

We share the view that nuclear-weapon-free zones and Mongolia's nuclear-free status contribute critically to the maintenance of international peace and security. In South-East Asia, together with other ASEAN countries, we look forward to the early signing by the nuclear-weapon States of the Protocol to the Treaty on the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone. We therefore share the disappointment over the delay of the conference on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, which we view to be an issue with serious repercussions for the credibility of the NPT regime, and call for its early convening.

We welcome the framework agreement on the destruction of chemical weapons in Syria, as well as other promising signs of the primacy of diplomacy and the peaceful settlement of pressing issues in the Middle

East. We hope that the agreement will be implemented in an expeditious, objective and comprehensive manner.

While issues related to weapons of mass destruction continue to occupy us, it is necessary to bear in mind that conventional arms directly affect the daily lives of innocent people. We strongly share the humanitarian purposes of international efforts related to addressing the effect of anti-personnel mines and cluster munitions. We also share the view that the Arms Trade Treaty could have been more inclusive. It is important at this stage to emphasize that the future implementation of the treaty must be balanced and non-discriminatory.

As disarmament goes to the very heart of the national security of all States, we must work harder together to

create an environment of strategic trust that enables States to believe that our collective achievements in disarmament are not attained at the expense of any member of the international community. Experiences of success in many parts of the world have shown us that the key is to expand and deepen cooperation, further mutual understanding, and sustain our commitment to common rules and principles, including respect for international law, the Charter of the United Nations, and the peaceful settlement of international disputes.

Viet Nam reiterates its commitment to working with international partners and with the Chair to ensure the success of the work of our Committee.

The meeting rose at 5.35 p.m.