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First Committee

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Official Records

Chair: Mr. Jinga. (Romania)

In the absence of the Chair, Mr. Ataíde Amaral (Portugal), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.

Agenda items 93 to 108 (continued)

General debate on all disarmament and international security agenda items

The Acting Chair: In accordance with our programme of work, we will begin with the traditional exchange with the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs on follow-up of resolutions and decisions adopted by the Committee at its previous sessions and the presentation of reports, including on the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, pursuant to resolution 70/69.

Before proceeding further, I would now like to consult members on inviting the following participants to today's exchange with the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs: His Excellency Ambassador Vladimir Drobnjak, Chair of the Secretary-General's Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters and Chair of the Board of Trustees of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research; and Ms. Renata Dwan, Director of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research.

May I take it that it is the wish of the Committee to invite Ambassador Drobnjak and Ms. Dwan to join the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs in the exchange on follow-up to resolutions and decisions adopted by the Committee this afternoon?

It was so decided.

The Acting Chair: In accordance with the decision just taken, I warmly welcome to the podium His Excellency Ambassador Vladimir Drobnjak, Chair of the Secretary-General's Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters and Chair of the Board of Trustees of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR), and Ms. Renata Dwan, Director of UNIDIR.

I shall now suspend the meeting to enable us to consider this topic in an informal setting, in keeping with the established practice of the Committee.

The meeting was suspended at 3.15 p.m. and resumed at 4.30 p.m.

The Acting Chair: Before I open the floor, I once again urge all speakers to kindly observe the established time limits.

Mr. Santos Maraver (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): Spain aligns itself with the statement made by the observer of the European Union (see A/C.1/73/PV.2).

The international non-proliferation regime, one of the major pillars of world peace and security, is at a historic crossroads. All members of the international community, especially those of us who believe in effective multilateralism, must contribute to preserving this great legacy. This objective was alluded to in the first resolution adopted by the General Assembly in 1946 (resolution 1 (I)), and has since been the ultimate goal of all our efforts. It is a global challenge that can be met only through consensus.

The nuclear non-proliferation regime is based on the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear

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Weapons (NPT). This year, we commemorate 50 years since its entry into force, and our country continues to believe in its full force and enormous potential. Its three pillars — disarmament, non-proliferation and the peaceful use of nuclear energy — must all be strengthened in parallel. The next NPT Review Conference will take place in 2020. We need to task it appropriately. A new failure of consensus, as occurred in 2015, would be a heavy blow to that cornerstone of non-proliferation. Like any other security regime, our regime is built on trust — not only to curb proliferation, which it has partially managed to do, but also to move towards the goal of a world without nuclear weapons.

We are committed to the negotiation and conclusion of a treaty banning the production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons, an objective that, despite the time that has elapsed, has not ceased to be an urgent necessity. We also call for the early entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and recognize the contribution of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization to global peace and stability. Finally, we cannot forget the objective of convening a conference on a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East. All of these are necessary and not mutually exclusive steps, and they form part of a multilateral agenda that requires the maximum consensus if it is to be fulfilled.

While reiterating our unequivocal commitment to the NPT, we demand that the Powers possessing nuclear weapons honour their commitments, as set out in article VI, to continue to take steps towards nuclear disarmament. We are well aware of the security context, but we insist on the need to pursue the objective of disarmament through concrete measures. The credibility of the regime depends on it.

There are many open fronts in the nuclear non-proliferation regime. As the representative of a European country, I will begin with the security system in Europe, based on an architecture of commitments and treaties on disarmament and arms control that have ensured a sustained period of peace and stability unprecedented in the history of the region. We call for safeguarding that architecture from any political disagreement or situation.

The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action with Iran is also of great importance to global peace and stability. It is a great achievement of multilateral diplomacy, and that is why we believe it should be preserved. Everything

indicates that Iran is fulfilling its commitments under the Plan, which is supported by an exhaustive regime of verifications and reports of the International Atomic Energy Agency. We also believe that Iran's role in a highly conflictive region, as well as its ballistic missile programme, raise legitimate concerns that need to be addressed in a frank dialogue with the Islamic Republic of Iran. If such a dialogue were successful, it would help to further consolidate the nuclear agreement.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea is the only country to have conducted nuclear tests in the twenty-first century. Its nuclear and ballistic missile programme is one of the greatest threats to global stability. We are hopeful about the process launched with the Panmunjom Declaration, but that hope cannot and must not exist without pragmatism. The process is incredibly complex and has already run aground on several occasions. Concrete steps must be taken towards the full, complete and irreversible denuclearization of the Korean peninsula before we can contemplate the lifting of the current sanctions regime.

The repeated use of chemical weapons in Syria since 2012 is one of the greatest violations of humanitarian law and a flagrant violation of the Chemical Weapons Convention. We have also witnessed other recent uses of chemical weapons in Kuala Lumpur and Salisbury. We wish to reiterate our unequivocal condemnation of any use of these prohibited weapons, by whomsoever, in whatever situation and for whatever reason. The international community must not stand idly by in the face of impunity for the use of chemical weapons.

Spain has participated in all initiatives undertaken to strengthen the chemical non-proliferation regime. We were among the founders of the International Partnership against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons, established in January, and in June we supported the creation of a mechanism for assigning responsibility for the use of chemical weapons in Syria, within the framework of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). Additionally, we firmly believe in the capacity and rigour of the OPCW, which since its establishment has enabled the destruction of 98 per cent of declared arsenals and was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2013.

Conventional weapons with indiscriminate effects and access to small arms and light weapons by the general population pose an increasingly obvious threat to peace, stability and progress. The link between those

weapons, armed violence and the lack of development is now indisputable. It is a global problem, and as such it can be tackled only through universally accepted responses.

We are guided by 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 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 successfully held its Review Conference this year. We call for the establishment of possible synergies between the three humanitarian conventions, in particular on victim assistance and the clearance of explosive remnants of war. Spanish legislation has established a regime that we believe may be a model to follow.

The Group of Governmental Experts on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems, meeting in Geneva, has succeeded in establishing the basis for progress in this area. Our proposal is to issue a political declaration and a possible code of conduct with transparency and confidence-building measures and exchanges of information and best practices, including possible advances in science and technology in the field of artificial intelligence.

I cannot conclude without mentioning the disarmament machinery, which for several years has suffered from paralysis that threatens to become a structural feature. Spain remains firmly in favour of revitalizing the existing institutional framework, instead of renouncing it. Let us be bold, but let us never lose sight of consensus or the aspiration to universalization, which is the only way to advance in this area.

Mrs. Liolocha (Democratic Republic of the Congo) (*spoke in French*): At the outset and on behalf of my delegation, I would like to convey my sincere congratulations to the Chair on his election to the chairmanship of the First Committee and to all the members of his Bureau. I assure them of our full cooperation. We remain convinced that their know-how and leadership will guide our work to success. I also wish to congratulate his predecessor for the way in which he conducted the proceedings of our Committee at the seventy-second session.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo associates itself with the statement delivered by the representative

of Indonesia, on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, and that delivered by the representative of Morocco, on behalf of the Group of African States (see A/C.1/73/PV.2).

International peace and security have always been a concern of our Organization. Indeed, with each passing day our world faces increasingly alarming situations. The rise of terrorism and violent extremism, the risk of seeing terrorists and/or other non-State actors gain access to nuclear weapons or other weapons of mass destruction, and the risk of detonation as a result of the accidental use of nuclear weapons must prompt us to act. The consequences of the use of nuclear weapons cannot be limited merely to national borders. They also have consequences that reverberate in States far from the targeted areas, including those within nuclear-weapon-free zones. No adequate humanitarian response can be delivered in the wake of a nuclear attack. For that reason, urgent collective initiatives, within a concerted multilateral framework, are necessary to avoid a global disaster.

My country, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, is party to both the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the Pelindaba Treaty. It will spare no effort to work constructively to achieve the end goal of a nuclear-weapon-free world. For that reason, we reiterate our desire to see the Middle East declared a nuclear-weapon-free zone.

My delegation warmly welcomes the adoption, on 7 July 2017, of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and participated in the opening ceremony on 20 September 2017. Our Government is working for its ratification. The opening of the Treaty for signing is an important step by States to attest to their strong desire to strengthen the global norms against the use, production and possession of nuclear weapons, and it has generated the necessary momentum for nuclear disarmament. It is therefore not normal for this objective to be relegated to a long-term process with the sole rationale that nuclear deterrence should play a role in the maintenance of regional and international security and stability. That is even more important in the light of the fact that an accident may occur at any moment and that no State, even a nuclear-weapon State, can address it alone. My delegation hopes that the NPT Review Conference to be held in 2020 will lead to tangible results.

With regard to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, it is critical and in the interest of the international

community that annex 2 States join the Treaty so as to enable its enforcement. While we reaffirm our support for the International Atomic Energy Agency, my delegation is of the view that building a nuclear programme for peaceful purposes is an inalienable right of every State, and stresses the right to the peaceful use of nuclear power without discrimination.

The issue of anti-personnel mines and the growing use of small arms and light weapons, improvised explosive devices and other conventional weapons remain a major source of concern for my country. Since gaining independence, and in particular over the past 20 years, the Democratic Republic of the Congo has been plagued by numerous armed conflicts. Foreign and national armed groups are participating in destabilizing activities in my country by engaging in illicit trafficking in natural resources. That situation has spawned illicit trafficking in weapons and the proliferation of mines and explosive remnants of war, which kill and affect thousands of people and, as such, constitute a genuine threat not only to international peace and security, but also to development. Civilians residing in these areas are the chief victims of these deadly devices abandoned by belligerents. Internally displaced persons are even more vulnerable to explosive remnants of war when they return to their homes.

In the light of these circumstances, the Democratic Republic of the Congo has acceded to various international conventions, including the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, the Convention on Cluster Munitions and others. We have undertaken to comply with all provisions in their texts. Within the framework of the implementation of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, for example, the Democratic Republic of the Congo has undertaken many initiatives, including the establishment of the Congolese Mine Action Centre and the development of a national strategic anti-mine plan.

Turning to small arms and light weapons, the Democratic Republic of the Congo supports the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. The National Commission for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons and the Reduction of Armed Violence was created, among other reasons, to assist in the implementation of the Programme of Action. A number of achievements have been made in that area, including the establishment of provincial branches of the Commission, the

development and adoption of a new national action plan to oversee and manage small arms and light weapons for 2018-2022, and the establishment of a national electronic registry to manage data on weapons that are circulated throughout our territory.

While there is a great deal yet to be done, my delegation commends all our partners for the work they have done and the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa, which has spared no effort to deliver the necessary assistance to the Democratic Republic of the Congo in building the capacities of the National Commission. My delegation commends the work of the third Review Conference of the United Nations Programme of Action, which was held in June, and we support its conclusions.

Along the same lines, we welcome the entry into force 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, also known as the Kinshasa Convention, and we welcome the holding of the first Conference of States Parties to the Convention, which was organized in Cameroon last June.

In a world where people's basic needs remain unmet, my delegation believes that it is important to reduce military spending in order free the necessary funds to address socioeconomic development in particular in developing countries.

With regard to the placement of weapons in outer space, my delegation is of the view that it runs counter to sustainable peace. Building confidence-building measures to prevent an arms race in outer space is strongly to be desired. Security in cyberspace and outer space requires good will and concerted and constructive global action.

In conclusion, my delegation remains convinced that it is incumbent on all States to uphold international peace, security and justice. We hope that with a little political will, our deliberations on this work will lead to the achievement of the goals that have been established.

Mrs. Nobre Fassinou (Benin) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I wish to congratulate the Chair on his election to preside over the First Committee. I have no doubt that under his able guidance, our deliberations will be successful. He can count on my delegation's support.

Benin aligns itself with the statements made by the representatives of Indonesia and Morocco on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and the Group of African States, respectively (see A/C.1/73/PV.2). We should like to make some additional comments in our national capacity.

The world is in crisis and in search of meaning. Rising regional tensions related to unresolved conflicts, terrorism, the threat of global warming, the erosion of universal values and trust among international actors reveal a world order that has been undermined. In many parts of the world, peace is seriously threatened and the risk of the use of nuclear weapons, whether deliberate or accidental, has grown. Violent extremism and radicalism significantly impact international peace security and stability.

The maintenance of international peace and security is one of the main goals of the United Nations and achieving a more secure and safe world has become more important than ever. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, through its Goal 16, also requires that we promote the development of peaceful, fair and inclusive societies.

For Benin, the establishment of a world of peace and security depends on three pillars: accelerating efforts in the field of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation; preserving the use of nuclear energy for strictly civilian purposes, as required by the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT); and successfully combating the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons.

With regard to nuclear disarmament, Benin participated in the conference to negotiate a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons, leading towards their total elimination, and supported the adoption, on 7 July 2017, of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. Benin is proud to have joined, on 26 September, the list of signatory countries to that important Treaty and is committed to taking all necessary steps to ensure its ratification.

For my country, the very existence of nuclear weapons carries the risk of their use. That is why we consider the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons to be a step in the right direction. Moreover, my country's decision to support the adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and then proceed to its signature is in line with its previous treaty commitments, as is the case with many other African

countries. Benin signed and ratified the Pelindaba Treaty, which establishes a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Africa. The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons is fully in line with the objectives of the Pelindaba Treaty.

Benin remains deeply concerned about the potentially catastrophic humanitarian consequences of the use of nuclear weapons, and even more so given the risks of such weapons falling into the hands of non-State actors, including terrorist organizations. Such a possibility underscores the urgent need for the international community to strengthen its efforts to avoid the risks of nuclear terrorism at all costs. As a State party to the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism, we invite all Member States to follow suit. We also call for strict compliance with resolution 1540 (2004).

My delegation welcomes the agenda for disarmament launched by the Secretary-General this year, and hopes that it will help to revive the dialogue to that end. We agree with the Secretary-General that disarmament supports sustainable development, insofar as the desired progress in this area will necessarily support efforts and resources to promote inclusive and integrated sustainable development throughout the world.

Benin underlines the importance of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, which remains one of the essential pillars of the international nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime, and we support the Treaty's three pillars. My delegation regrets the lack of consensus at the 2015 NPT Review Conference, which made it impossible to adopt a final document. The preparatory work for the next Review Conference in 2020 has begun and the most recent related meeting was held in Geneva in May. My delegation hopes to see the NPT regime extended and strengthened. We cherish the hope that the 2020 Review Conference will herald new political momentum towards nuclear disarmament.

Benin is committed to nuclear-weapon-free zones and is a party to the 1996 African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty. We consider the establishment of such zones to be important achievements in the implementation of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. In this context, my delegation reiterates its support for initiatives under way to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. We support all

efforts to remove obstacles to the holding of a diplomatic conference to establish such a zone.

With regard to regional disarmament, Benin underlines once again the significant role played by the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa, headquartered in Lomé. The Centre provides valuable technical support to African States in the implementation of measures on peace, security and arms control, in particular in the area of combating the illicit circulation of small arms and light weapons. The Centre deserves sustainable funding that is more closely commensurate with its mandate.

Benin reaffirms its commitment to the implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, and stresses the need to strengthen international cooperation and assistance, including through the effective transfer of appropriate technologies to ensure the effective control, tracing and marking of small arms and light weapons. My delegation welcomes the convergence between the Programme of Action and the Arms Trade Treaty, which remains the only international legally binding instrument of the twenty-first century to regulate the transfer of conventional arms. We invite all States that have not yet signed and/or ratified this Treaty to do so as soon as possible with a view to achieving its universalization.

Mr. Ke (Cambodia): At the outset, my delegation would like to congratulate the Chair on his election to preside over the First Committee, as well as the other members of the Bureau. We assure them of our full cooperation and support.

Cambodia would like to align itself with the statements delivered by the representatives of Indonesia, on behalf of Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, and of the Philippines, on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (see A/C.1/73/PV.2).

In our current world, where conflict causes millions of refugees and has disastrous consequences, disarmament is more crucial than ever. Cambodia welcomes the comprehensive agenda for disarmament launched by Secretary-General António Guterres in May. It suggests some concrete actions for disarmament to save humankind, disarmament that saves lives, disarmament for future generations and strengthening partnerships for disarmament. Together, we can build a more peaceful world.

We are experiencing tensions arising from long- and short-term conflicts. The world continues to be alarmed over incidents and the threat of use of nuclear weapons. While there is no agreement on any legally binding instrument on nuclear disarmament between the nuclear States and non-nuclear States, we must have some mechanisms to guarantee that those weapons will not be used.

We were disappointed by the failure to reach consensus at the 2015 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). My delegation therefore wishes to see active engagement on the part of nuclear-weapon and non-nuclear-weapon States alike, through a positive attitude, towards reaching the final goal of the NPT. Also, we look forward to a fruitful outcome of the 2020 NPT Review Conference.

Cambodia does not possess nuclear weapons. As enshrined in our Constitution, “the manufacturing, use and storage of nuclear, chemical or biological weapons shall be absolutely prohibited”. Cambodia joins others in welcoming Thailand and Tuvalu on their recent ratifications of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). With Thailand’s joining of the group, all States members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) have ratified the CTBT. Through this, we can see that ASEAN attaches top priority to ensuring peace and security in our own region and to freeing the world from nuclear weapons.

Even though the States parties to the CTBT have increased, the Treaty has not yet entered into force. While we await the universalization of the Treaty, States should refrain from conducting nuclear-weapon tests or any other nuclear explosions, which would undermine the objective of the Treaty. We call on all remaining countries, especially the annex 2 countries, to sign and ratify the CTBT without delay so as to ensure that there will be no testing of such devastating weapons.

While we strongly oppose nuclear weapons, we reaffirm the undisputed right of countries to develop, research, produce and use nuclear energy for the purpose of peace and development.

As a responsible member of all major conventions on weapons of mass destruction (WMD), Cambodia strongly condemns the use of any type of WMD at any time, anywhere and by anyone. Almost a decade ago, the Cambodian National Assembly approved a law on the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, biochemical

weapons, radioactive weapons and chemical weapons, which bans producing, recycling, transferring and transporting such weapons in the country. Moreover, the law also established the National Authority for Chemical Weapons for the control and investigation of chemical substances, as well as a laboratory for observing these substances in the country.

I thank our partners—the European Union Chemical Biological Radiological and Nuclear Risk Mitigation Centres of Excellence Initiative; the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute; and the European Commission Joint Research Centre—for providing technical support and capacity-building to our National Authority for Chemical Weapons.

To reiterate our commitments in line with global efforts, in 2014 Cambodia, in cooperation with the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs, organized two consecutive workshops on non-conventional chemical, biological and nuclear explosives and on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004), respectively.

With regard to regional efforts, a region free of nuclear weapons is a core value of the South-East Asian nations, as enshrined in the ASEAN Charter, and it is why we are working to strengthen the Treaty on the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone by laying out and subsequently reviewing a plan of action from time to time. Moving forward, we must ensure the signing of the Treaty by nuclear-weapon States.

The increase in the illicit trade of conventional weapons is still one of the biggest challenges that we are facing today. While we recognize the sovereign right of each country to use conventional weapons, we must work together to regulate them. By properly 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, we can control the flow of weapons, as well as prevent them from getting into the wrong hands of any non-State actors.

Cambodia attaches great importance to the Ottawa Convention, and therefore we highly commend the firm solidarity among all States parties to the Convention, as well as all concerned international and non-governmental organizations, and others stakeholders, who are collectively contributing towards a mine-free world. We look forward to the 17th Meeting

of States Parties to the Ottawa Convention, to be held in Geneva later this year.

In conclusion, my delegation believes that we have the shared responsibilities to move forward with fruitful negotiations towards the non-proliferation of weapons and to avert the taking up of arms or any type of weapons as a means to address the conflicts that have been raging in parts of our world.

Ms. Plepytė (Lithuania): First of all, allow me to congratulate the Chair and the other members of the Bureau on the assumption of their functions.

Lithuania aligns itself with the statement made on behalf of the European Union (EU) (see A/C.1/73/PV.2). Let me highlight a few points in my national capacity.

The security environment we live in is dynamic, complex and highly unpredictable. We face already known and completely new security challenges: military build-ups and muscle-flexing; military exercises of unprecedented scope and scale; active intelligence operations, including sophisticated cyberattacks against high-value political and economic targets; hybrid threats and so forth. All that does not make our planet a safer place.

Lithuania continues to highlight that our agreed security principles, enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, the Helsinki Final Act and other internationally or regionally agreed legal instruments, should be respected and preserved. Upholding the integrity of the rules-based international system is of crucial importance, as it is designed to preserve and guarantee international peace, security and stability. For the time being, our arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament system faces numerous challenges that are testing our international community's resolve and cohesion.

Lithuania is fully committed to the consistent implementation of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) as a cornerstone of the global non-proliferation regime. We highlight the significance of upholding and preserving the NPT in all three pillars: non-proliferation, disarmament and the peaceful use of nuclear energy. We support an inclusive and gradual approach to nuclear disarmament, and we are looking forward to the successful work of the 2020 NPT Review Conference.

Given the current geopolitical context, we do not agree that the delegitimization of nuclear weapons

is a realistic addition to the harmonization of the disarmament and security ends. Lithuania fully supports further practical steps towards nuclear disarmament, strategic stability and negotiated, verified reductions of nuclear forces. We have to be realistic — nuclear disarmament is not possible without the engagement of nuclear States. Lithuania, as a non-nuclear-weapon State, highlights the importance of confidence-building measures, reciprocal transparency and effective verification as integral and essential parts of the nuclear arms control and non-proliferation process. In this light, we underscore the importance of preserving the integrity of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, which is an instrument essential to international security and strategic stability and is ensured only by the full compliance of its parties.

We believe that the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) remains a meaningful achievement of the non-proliferation architecture. The JCPOA was concerted exclusively to prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons, and it has worked, as attested by multiple inspections by the International Atomic Energy Agency and other sources. However, we need to bear in mind that the JCPOA does not cover Iran's ballistic missile programme or its implications for regional security. All these issues should be addressed in a comprehensive manner.

Lithuania fully supports the efforts of stakeholders towards the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula, which has to be complete, verifiable and irreversible. Until then, sanctions must remain in place and be fully implemented by all countries.

Since 2013, chemical weapons have claimed numerous lives in Syria. Earlier this year, we witnessed the reckless use of a nerve agent, this time in Salisbury, on European soil for the first time since the end of the Second World War. In February 2017, a chemical nerve agent was used in a fatal incident in Malaysia. We cannot allow any further erosion of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC). Lithuania highly welcomes the decision adopted by the CWC Conference of States Parties in June to enhance the capacity of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons to identify the perpetrators of the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic, as well as universally. Lithuania also fully supports new EU-restrictive measures regime to address any use and proliferation of chemical weapons horizontally.

Finally, let me express Lithuania's strong commitment to active engagement and cooperation in the area of arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament.

Mr. Al Towaiya (Oman) (*spoke in Arabic*): The delegation of Oman, like other delegations, would like to congratulate the Chair on his election to preside over the First Committee at its seventy-third session. We wish him and the other members of the Bureau every success. My delegation also expresses its deep appreciation for the efforts made by the representative of brotherly Iraq in his capacity as Chair of the Committee at the previous session.

My delegation aligns itself with the statements delivered on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and the Group of Arab States (see A/C.1/73/PV.2).

The First Committee is mandated to identify solutions to threats to international peace and security and to coordinate cooperation concerning issues of disarmament. However, despite the major endeavours undertaken recently in this area, we recognize that we must pursue our efforts because we still have much to achieve, especially in the area of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

The illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in many regions of the world is a major danger and poses a threat to national and international peace and security. My delegation takes this opportunity to recall the consequences of small arms and light weapons, including the killing of millions of human beings, the violation of human rights, the exacerbation of poverty and the diversion of resources away from efforts of human development. Nor should we forget the link between those weapons and drug trafficking and national and transnational organized crime in all its forms.

Success in nuclear disarmament would not only contribute to strengthening international peace and security, but would also save vast resources that are badly needed for development efforts and for promoting the rule of law, preserving the environment and preventing nuclear material from falling into the hands of terrorist groups.

The present deadlock on disarmament issues and the lack of optimism among Member States fuel doubts and suspicions regarding the multilateral mechanism,

which has been idle for some time. Member States must of course demonstrate courage to overcome the obstacles to disarmament, especially nuclear disarmament. This is a key objective to address threats to international peace and security. In that regard, we particularly stress the need for States to demonstrate the political will to renounce double standards, especially in the light of the ongoing failure in recent years to reach consensus on many nuclear disarmament issues, including failures in the United Nations Disarmament Commission, the failure to achieve the entry into force of the Comprehensive Test-Ban-Treaty and the failure of the Conference on Disarmament to reach consensus on its agenda.

The Sultanate of Oman, like all Arab States, reiterates its call for the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East. We are confident that achieving this goal would help to create a positive environment conducive to cooperation among the States of the region and to ending the arms race, while achieving peace and trust in the region. That would benefit the entire world and international peace and security.

Establishing a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East is of the utmost importance, requiring the support and assistance of the international community. My country supports that proposal and calls on Israel to adhere to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) in order to implement the 1995 deal, which included the adoption of a resolution on the Middle East and identified an objective link between the indefinite extension of the NPT, on the one hand, and the establishment of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction, on the other, as well as Israel's accession to the Treaty.

In conclusion, we call on all Member States to uphold their obligations under all treaties and conventions related to disarmament, and in particular regarding nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. We hope that the Committee's deliberations and the resolutions it adopts under Mr. Jinga's chairmanship will help to meet the aspirations of all the peoples of the world to achieve security, peace and stability.

Mr. Panayotov (Bulgaria): Let me begin by congratulating Ambassador Ion Jinga of Romania and the other members of the Bureau on assuming the

stewardship of the First Committee at this session. They may be assured of my delegation's full support in their endeavours in steering the Committee's work to a successful outcome.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank last year's Chair, Ambassador Mohammed Bahr Aluloom of Iraq, for his tireless work during the seventy-second session.

Bulgaria aligns itself with the statement made on behalf of the European Union on 8 October (see A/C.1/73/PV.2). I would now like to outline a few points of importance to my country.

The current international security situation is more than challenging. Recent developments have demonstrated that multilateralism is at risk, and at the same time it is only through multilateralism that the challenges that we are all facing can be successfully addressed. In this regard, we welcome the Secretary-General's agenda for disarmament, as it offers a much-needed, all-encompassing approach integrating the entire United Nations system.

Unfortunately, since last year we have witnessed several new cases of chemical weapons and chemical substances being used not only in Syria, but most recently in Salisbury, in the United Kingdom. Not only is this worrisome, but it also puts in jeopardy the very norm prohibiting the use of such weapons, established by the Chemical Weapons Convention. Bulgaria condemns any use of chemical weapons in the strongest possible terms. No such action should be without consequences and all perpetrators should be held accountable.

Recent developments on the Korean peninsula are encouraging. Those first steps, however, must be followed by the engagement of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in negotiations leading to complete, irreversible and verifiable denuclearization. We call on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to comply fully with all relevant Security Council resolutions.

The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) on Iran's nuclear programme, concluded in July 2015, remains of historic significance. As confirmed by the most recent reports, Iran continues to implement its nuclear-related commitments. The JCPOA remains of great importance for regional and global stability, and we encourage all parties to the JCPOA to strictly abide by its terms.

Bulgaria reiterates its commitment to the objective of achieving a world without nuclear weapons. We firmly believe that any advance in nuclear disarmament will be possible only within the framework of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), specifically its article VI. The NPT remains the cornerstone of the global non-proliferation regime and the framework for nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. Therefore, no effort should be spared to achieve a successful outcome at the 2020 NPT Review Conference. The only feasible approach is a constructive, realistic and gradual one, based on practical and implementable measures, building blocks that will strengthen the international disarmament and non-proliferation regime. It encompasses bringing the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty into force, ending the impasse in the Conference on Disarmament, including by enlarging it, and starting negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty. In that regard, it is worth noting that the Conference on Disarmament established five subsidiary bodies earlier this year, resulting in the adoption of four substantive reports that will hopefully serve as a basis for its work in 2019.

It is equally important to achieve progress in the area of conventional weapons. We welcome the 2018 outcome document of the third 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 (A/CONF.192/2018/RC/3, annex). The outcome document provides a good basis for guiding our efforts to further strengthen the global regime against the illicit trade in such weapons and to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, among other things.

The universalization of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) remains a priority for my country. The international norms for a responsible arms trade established by the ATT play an important role in preventing atrocities, curbing terrorism and promoting international security.

The vulnerability of cyberspace is no longer an emerging threat but a real one that requires our immediate attention. We need new rules to respond to the new challenges. In that regard, Bulgaria supports the development of universal norms and principles for responsible behaviour by States in cyberspace and confidence-building measures.

In conclusion, I want to reiterate that only through multilateralism and by reaffirming the rules-based approach can we overcome the challenges we currently face.

Mr. Ovsyanko (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): I would like to join previous speakers in congratulating you, Sir, on your election to chair the First Committee.

The Committee's meetings provide us with an excellent opportunity to take stock of developments since the previous session of the General Assembly. It is clear that international security issues are as relevant today as they have always been. However, we must acknowledge that the world has become neither more stable nor more predictable. The level of confrontation between States today is the highest it has been for the past decade. That has consequences for many issues on the international agenda, and has politicized our multilateral disarmament platforms. The problems surrounding the existence of nuclear weapons not only remain unresolved but to some extent have even been further exacerbated.

We are obliged to conclude that initiatives to establish parallel norms aimed at the total prohibition of nuclear weapons have made the polemics even more intense. That will hardly lead to genuine progress in the area of nuclear disarmament, if only because all of the nuclear-weapon States have remained outside the framework of such initiatives. We believe that the only way to achieve our goals is by establishing confidence-building measures among every single participant in international efforts to achieve peace, with the involvement of nuclear- and non-nuclear-weapon States alike and with the provision of effective universal security assurances.

The Republic of Belarus was among the first States following the collapse of the Soviet Union to voluntarily relinquish possession of a significant nuclear arsenal without preconditions, and we continue to be dedicated to our common efforts to build a nuclear-weapon-free world. We have been working responsibly to achieve that goal as a direct participant in the process based on the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). We believe that we should take resolute measures to strengthen the NPT and other global and regional instruments in the areas of non-proliferation, security and stability, which will ultimately be needed to facilitate the achievement of our main strategic goal of comprehensive and full nuclear disarmament. Ensuring

the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty as soon as possible will play a crucial role in achieving that. Belarus was among the first States to ratify that basic instrument, and we urge the States that the future of the Treaty depends on their demonstrating the necessary political will and take steps to ensure its entry into force.

We must give new momentum to the process for establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones. The resolution adopted at the 1995 NPT Review Conference regarding the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East has still not been implemented, and neither is Europe covered by such a zone. In the mid-1990s, Belarus proposed the notion of establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central and Eastern Europe, but our well-intentioned call unfortunately went unheeded.

Sadly, the subject of the use of chemical weapons continues to be one of the most basic issues on the international agenda. We want to reiterate once again that the use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere, under any circumstances is completely unacceptable. However, we object to any resolutions that are confrontational and that politicize the work of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons or undermine trust among Member States.

Last year, at the initiative of the Republic of Belarus, the General Assembly almost unanimously adopted resolution 72/23, on prohibiting the development of new forms of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs). It is one of the few resolutions today, if not the only one, to provide for a preventive mechanism for establishing internationally agreed procedures that can enable us to monitor the possible development and proliferation of new WMDs, and we call on all States to further support it.

Preventing weapons of mass destruction from falling into the wrong hands must also remain a priority in the joint efforts of Member States. We are conducting a responsible and consistent policy regarding the implementation of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004), which we see as a unique mechanism for a comprehensive and holistic approach to combating the proliferation of WMDs and their means of delivery, related technologies and materiel. We are actively involved in providing assistance for the resolution's implementation in the Commonwealth of Independent States.

I would like to point to some positive developments. We should not ignore the outcomes of the inter-Korean summits, including the goal announced by the participants of the full denuclearization of the Korean peninsula, as well as the meeting between the United States and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in Singapore. We urge the international community to support such efforts.

The Republic of Belarus attaches great importance to the work of the United Nations Conference on Disarmament. Breaking the deadlock in this multilateral negotiating body is an important part of our efforts to achieve complete and universal disarmament and a more secure world. During its 2018 session, the States were unable to overcome some protracted disagreements, and the Conference was unable to avoid some politicization of its activities. However, we should not say that we were unable to make effective use of the session's opportunities altogether. The establishment of five subsidiary bodies has enabled us to hold in-depth discussions on various agenda items in an effort to reach compromise. It is important that the decisions taken enabled us to take our work beyond a mere exchange of opinions. We should maintain that momentum in the work of the Conference.

We note that gaps persist regarding the legal regulation of the use of outer space, particularly with regard to preventing the placement of weapons in outer space. We support the Russian and Chinese proposal for a draft treaty on preventing the placement of weapons in outer space and the use or threat of force against outer space objects. Its adoption would be a significant contribution to solving the problem of eliminating unregulated issues within existing agreements in the area of outer space law. Belarus is actively participating in the work of the Group of Governmental Experts on Further Practical Measures for the Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space, established in accordance with resolution 72/250. As a sponsor of the resolution, we will therefore continue to work together to develop recommendations, parameters and content for an international instrument in this area. We commend the focus of the members of the Group of Governmental Experts on effectively fulfilling their mandate.

We are troubled about the climate of mistrust that has arisen in the wake of the third 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, held in June in New York. A fundamental disagreement on future ways to improve the mechanisms for countering such weapons has threatened the traditional adoption by consensus of the outcomes of these conferences. We urge countries to refrain from using the forum of such conferences for confrontations or promoting ideas and initiatives that lack consensus.

We should point out that security issues relating to information and telecommunications are increasingly relevant in today's world. Modern technological developments make it essential for us to formulate effective practical measures to combat cyberthreats. In that regard, we support the initiative launched in the First Committee by the Russian Federation for a draft resolution on achievements in the area of information and telecommunications in the context of international security.

It is clear that political will is essential if we are to deal with the crises prevailing in international relations today. Effective long-term solutions in the area of international security and disarmament would make a direct and decisive contribution to peace, stability, sustainable development and, ultimately, the very existence of humankind.

Mr. Ja'afari (Syrian Arabic Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate my colleague Ambassador Jinga, the Permanent Representative of Romania, on his election to chair this important Committee at its current session.

My delegation associates itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/73/PV.2).

As the Committee is aware, the challenges facing our world continue to increase, chief among them the development and modernization of nuclear arsenals and the threat of their use by nuclear-weapon States that are parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), as well as the spread of terrorism and its use as a political weapon by the Governments of some Member States of our international Organization, including certain permanent members of the Security Council, and their sponsorship of organizations that the Security Council has designated as terrorists for their use of chemical weapons.

The fact of certain nuclear-weapon States' continued protection of Israel's possession of nuclear weapons and cover-up of its refusal to accede to the NPT became even more blatant when the United States and Britain ensured the failure of the 2015 NPT Review Conference. The ongoing support of the United States, Britain, France, Canada, Germany and other Western countries has helped the Israeli military to develop nuclear, biological and chemical programmes and has encouraged the Israeli entity to continue challenging the will of the international community through its refusal to accede to the NPT and other conventions on weapons of mass destruction.

In late 2003, during Syria's membership of the Security Council, my country promoted an initiative aimed at freeing the Middle East of all weapons of mass destruction and nuclear weapons in particular. However, the delegation of the United States at the time threatened to use the veto if we introduced a draft resolution on the subject in the Council. With that in mind, my country reiterates its call to Member States to free the Middle East of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction, and to bring pressure to bear on Israel to accede to the NPT as a non-nuclear party and subject all of its nuclear facilities and activities to oversight by the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Based on its belief in the importance of freeing the Middle East of all weapons of mass destruction, and nuclear weapons in particular, the Syrian Government condemns in the strongest terms the crime of the use of chemical weapons. As the members of the Committee know, my country joined the Chemical Weapons Convention to prove to the world our commitment to refraining from any use of chemical weapons. We have met our obligations under the Treaty despite the harsh and difficult situation we have been experiencing, and that was confirmed by Ms. Sigrid Kaag, Chair of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations joint mission, in her June 2014 report to the Security Council. With the destruction of the final two sites and the verification by the Fact-finding Mission of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) that the debris from them was removed, my country fulfilled all its commitments and destroyed all its sites for producing chemical weapons. We are now discussing issues related to Syria's national declaration due within the framework of the OPCW.

My country has sent more than 160 letters to the Secretary-General, the Security Council, the Joint Investigative Mechanism, the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1540 (2004) and the Counter-Terrorism Committee. The first such letter was sent four months before the first chemical attack that took place in Khan Al-Assal in 2013. The letters underscored our fears that certain States that support terrorism might provide terrorist groups with chemical weapons and then claim that Syria was responsible for their use. They contained accurate information on terrorist organizations' possession and use of toxic chemical substances against both civilians and the military. After the invasion of Libya, the substances were brought from Libya with the assistance of the intelligence agencies of various countries hostile to Syria. They also provided those toxic chemical substances to Da'esh and the Al-Nusra Front, with the assistance of Turkish intelligence across the Turkish border and with the direct support at the time of the Bandar Bin Sultan organization. One of the letters also cited a terrorist named Haitham Qassab who smuggled two litres of sarin from Libya to Turkey on a civilian plane that landed at Istanbul airport, which were afterwards passed on to terrorist organizations in Syria across our border with Turkey.

In many letters, we have also informed the former Joint Investigative Mechanism and the Security Council of collusion by the Qatar regime, which funded terrorist organizations and asked them to use chlorine gas and other toxic chemicals in areas that they controlled. The aim was to take photographs and shoot video footage in order to blame the Syrian army for using the chemicals and thereby defame the Syrian Government. Certain countries, particularly Britain, also provided terrorist armed groups with media support, calling them "White Helmets" and awarding an Oscar to a film about them.

Because we consider the Conference on Disarmament to be the sole forum for negotiating disarmament issues and look forward to seeing a consensus achieved on its role and mandate, as stipulated at the General Assembly's first special session devoted to disarmament, in 1978, we denounce the politicization by Western countries, particularly the United States, Britain and France and their allies, that has obstructed the work of the Conference and prevented a consensus on its programme of work during its previous session owing to political issues that had nothing to do with disarmament.

In conclusion, terrorism — which is supported, sponsored and provided with toxic chemical substances by the countries that finance it — will sooner or later turn against the Governments of those countries and others. In that context, we underline the importance of Member States shouldering their responsibility and ending the smuggling of weapons and munitions of all types and other related substances, lethal and non-lethal alike, into Syria. They should also stop smuggling armed terrorists across the borders of neighbouring countries into my country.

The Acting Chair: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item at this meeting.

I shall now call on those delegations that have requested to speak in exercise of the right of reply. I should like to remind all delegations that the first intervention is limited to 10 minutes and the second to 5 minutes.

Mr. Kim Song (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): I would like to exercise the right of reply in response to the statement made by the representative of Spain, who believes that it is sanctions that brought the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to the dialogue table. In the past few days of the general debate, there have been some other European countries, such as France and the Netherlands, that have shared the same misconception.

This is not a matter of sanctions. Frankly speaking, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has lived under the pressure of sanctions for seven decades from the first day of its founding. We have acquired strong qualities of self-reliance and self-development to overcome any sanctions and pressure. Even if the sanctions continued for another 10 or 100 years, we would overcome them and emerge stronger. This year, with the determination and will to put an end to the history of confrontation and achieve lasting peace on the Korean peninsula, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea set forth proposals for the establishment of a peaceful regime and the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula and is making sincere efforts to that end.

It is not a matter of sanctions; it is rather a matter of lack of mutual respect. The Spanish representative said that while she remained hopeful, we should not forget past experiences and continue to apply pressure and implement sanctions until there are tangible results of denuclearization. Does she think it was the lack of sanctions that stalled the negotiations in the past? That

would be wrong again. It was the lack of trust between the concerned parties. That is why the Democratic People's Republic of Korea maintains that the quickest way to denuclearization is a step-by-step approach following the principle of simultaneous actions, while giving priority to confidence-building measures.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea remains steadfast in its goal and will to achieve peace, stability and the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula. We have just taken the first step. We are open to all and will continue to reach out and engage with the international community in the future.

Mr. Wood (United States of America): I am taking the floor in exercise of the right of reply to respond to comments that were made by the representative of Syria.

As we have just heard, Syria continues to deny its use of chemical weapons. It has repeatedly used them against its own people. The evidence is there and is not in question. It blames the White Helmets for staging attacks. It accuses others of providing chemical weapons and other support to terrorists. These charges are simply unfounded. Let me be clear. Syria needs to understand that if it uses chemical weapons again, there will be a very clear response from my country and its allies. We will continue, I am sure, in the days ahead to hear Syria deny its use of chemical weapons. Syria is not credible and it is fooling no one in this room.

Mr. Elmajerbi (Libya) (*spoke in Arabic*): My country's delegation has asked to exercise the right of reply in response to the Syrian representative's claim that chemical substances — in particular sarin has — were transferred from Libya to Syria. This is completely unfounded. Libya has never possessed such a gas, its chemical weapons stockpile did not include that gas and all chemical weapons in Libya have been destroyed by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), with the assistance of the friendly countries Germany and Denmark. Our

stockpile was destroyed in Germany, and all stockpiles of Libya's chemical weapons have been destroyed, as confirmed by the OPCW. All States Members of the United Nations have received letters in that regard. I call on the Syrian representative to be accurate and refrain from making baseless accusations.

Mr. Hallak (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): Those who protect and cover up the chemical, biological and nuclear arsenal of Israel; those who invent flimsy pretexts to safeguard their chemical arsenals; those who destroyed Iraq based on a lie about weapons of mass destruction; those who withdrew from the international agreement with Iran; those who stopped financing the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East; those who withdrew from UNESCO; and those who continue to pressure the United Nations on financing issues and threaten to withdraw from the World Trade Organization — they do not have the right to falsely accuse the Syrian Arab Republic of possessing chemical weapons. Their record is particularly fraught with proven and non-fabricated facts about the use of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons against civilians in many parts of the world.

With regard to the statement just made by the representative of Libya, I call on him, likewise, to be accurate and to listen carefully to what we said. We did not say that the two litres of sarin gas were produced in Libya; we simply stated that it was transferred from Libya on board a civilian flight.

The Acting Chair: I take this opportunity to remind all delegations that the deadline for the submission of draft resolutions and decisions to the Secretariat is Thursday, 18 October, at noon. Delegations are urged to adhere to this deadline to enable the Secretariat to process the documents in a timely manner, which will ultimately expedite the collective work of the Committee.

The meeting rose at 5.50 p.m.