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First Committee

17th meeting

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Official Records

Chair: Mr. Dabbashi (Libya)

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

Agenda items 89 to 107 (continued)

Thematic discussion on item subjects and introduction and consideration of all draft resolutions submitted under all disarmament and related international security agenda items

The Chair (*spoke in Arabic*): We will begin today by hearing the introductory statement on the cluster “Other disarmament measures and international security”.

I now have the pleasure to welcome Ambassador Peter Woolcott of Australia, who will deliver the introductory statement on the cluster on other disarmament measures and international security on behalf of Ambassador Deborah Stokes of Australia, the Chair of the Group of Governmental Experts on Developments in the Field of Information and Telecommunications in the Context of International Security.

Mr. Woolcott (Australia): I have the honour to present the report of the United Nations Group of Governmental Experts on Developments in the Field of Information and Telecommunications in the Context of International Security, contained in document A/68/98. I do so on behalf of Ambassador Deborah Stokes, the Chair of the Group of Governmental Experts, who regrettably cannot be here in New York today.

“The Group was convened pursuant to resolution 66/24, which was adopted by the General

Assembly on 2 December 2011. The Secretary-General was requested, in paragraph 4 of the resolution, to convene a Group that would

‘continue to study existing and potential threats in the sphere of information security and possible cooperative measures to address them, including norms, rules or principles of responsible behaviour of States and confidence-building measures with regard to information space’.

“The Secretary-General appointed a Group comprising 15 experts nominated by the Governments of Argentina, Australia, Belarus, Canada, China, Egypt, Estonia, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Japan, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America. The Group met on three occasions, for one week each, in August 2012 at United Nations Headquarters in New York, in January 2013 in Geneva, and in June 2013 again at United Nations Headquarters in New York.

“As requested in the resolution, the Group took as its starting point the report of the previous Group of Governmental Experts, contained in document A/65/201 of 30 July 2010. I wish to particularly acknowledge the contribution of the Chair of the previous Group, Ambassador Andrey Krutskikh, who served on the current Group and whose experience and advice was greatly appreciated by the Group and by myself as Chair. The Group considered the views and assessments

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of Member States on developments in the field of information and telecommunications in the context of international security, provided in response to the invitations from the General Assembly contained in its resolutions 64/25, 65/41 and 66/24, as well as other measures contained in resolutions 55/63, 56/121, 57/239, 58/199 and 64/211. The Group also took note of document A/66/359.

“The Group deliberated on the issues set out in its mandate over the three sessions and considered threats, risks and vulnerabilities; ways and means of building cooperation for a peaceful, secure, resilient and open information and communication technology (ICT) environment; agreed-upon recommendations in relation to norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviour of States; confidence-building measures and the exchange of information; and capacity-building measures. I am pleased to advise that, at its final session, following intensive discussions and negotiations, the Group was able to adopt its report by consensus. That result was a reflection of the constructive approach that each expert brought to the Group. I wish to thank each of the experts for their strong support for the governmental experts process and their contribution to reaching consensus on the final report.

“The Group’s consideration of existing and potential threats, building on the 2010 report, is set out in paragraphs 5 to 10. The current report notes that ICTs are dual-use technologies and can be used for both legitimate and malicious purposes. Threats to individuals, businesses, national infrastructure and Governments have grown more acute, and incidents more damaging. The sources of these threats comprise both States and non-State actors. Furthermore, individuals and groups may act as proxies for States in the conduct of malicious ICT actions. The absence of common understandings on acceptable State behaviour with regard to the use of ICTs increases the risk to international peace and security.

“The expanding use of ICTs in critical infrastructure and industrial control systems creates new possibilities for disruption. The rapid increase in the use of mobile communications devices, web services, social networks and cloud computing services expands the challenges to security. Different levels of capacity for ICT

security among States can increase vulnerability in an interconnected world. Those vulnerabilities are amplified by disparities in national law, regulations and practices related to the use of ICTs. The Group notes that Member States have repeatedly affirmed the need for cooperative action against threats resulting from the malicious use of ICTs. Further progress in international cooperation will require an array of actions to promote a peaceful, secure, open and cooperative ICT environment.

“I would like now to draw to members’ attention the key recommendations of the report.

“In relation to norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviour of States, the application of norms derived from existing international law relevant to the use of ICTs by States is an essential measure to reduce risks to international peace, security and stability. Common understanding on how such norms shall apply to State behavior and the use of ICTs by States requires further study. Given the unique attributes of ICTs, additional norms could be developed over time.

“International law, in particular the Charter of the United Nations, is applicable and essential to maintaining peace and stability and promoting an open, secure, peaceful and accessible ICT environment. State sovereignty and international norms and principles that flow from sovereignty apply to State conduct of ICT-related activities, and to their jurisdiction over ICT infrastructure within their territory. State efforts to address the security of ICTs must go hand in hand with respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. States should intensify cooperation against criminal or terrorist use of ICTs. States must meet their international obligations regarding internationally wrongful acts attributable to them. States must not use proxies to commit such acts. They should also seek to ensure their territories are not used by non-State actors for the unlawful use of ICTs.

“The report observes that voluntary confidencebuilding measures can promote trust and assurance among States and help reduce the risk of conflict by increasing predictability and by reducing misperception. The report outlines a range of such measures, which it recommends that States consider implementing. These measures include the exchange of information on national strategies and

policies, best practices, decision-making processes and relevant national organizations; the creation of consultative frameworks, bilaterally, regionally or multilaterally; enhanced sharing of information among States on ICT security incidents; exchanges of information between national computer emergency response teams bilaterally, within computer emergency response communities and in other forums; increased cooperation to address incidents that could affect ICT or critical infrastructure; and enhanced mechanisms for law enforcement cooperation.

“The report affirms the importance of capacity-building measures in the effort to secure ICTs and their use. Some States may require assistance in their efforts to improve the security of critical ICT infrastructure; develop technical skills and appropriate legislation, strategies and regulatory frameworks to fulfil their responsibilities; and bridge the divide in the security of ICTs and their use.

“The report draws attention to the different roles of the various stakeholders in the security and use of ICTs — States, the private sector and civil society — in relation to the development of norms, confidence-building measures and capacity-building measures. The report also comments on the different roles of the United Nations and regional organizations in improving the security and use of ICTs.

“The Group was supported in its work by the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, which served as consultant and was represented by James Lewis, Kerstin Vignard and Ben Baseley-Walker. Ewen Buchanan of the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs served as Secretary of the Group. I wish to express my appreciation for the excellent support provided by those individuals and organizations.

“As I have outlined, the Group has made a number of important recommendations, some of which appear for the first time in a United Nations document. The report provides a solid foundation for further work. I commend the report of the Group of Governmental Experts to the First Committee and, through it, to Member States, for their consideration.”

The Chair (*spoke in Arabic*): In accordance with the established practice of the Committee, I will now suspend the meeting to afford delegations the opportunity to have an interactive discussion with Ambassador Woolcott through an informal question and answer session.

The meeting was suspended at 10.15 a.m. and resumed at 10.25 a.m.

The Chair (*spoke in Arabic*): I will now open the floor for the remaining speakers on the cluster “Other weapons of mass destruction”. I urge all delegations taking the floor once again kindly to adhere to the time limit of no more than 10 minutes for statements, to enable the Committee to better manage the limited time remaining for it to complete its work.

Mr. Alnaqshabandi (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, my delegation aligns itself with the statements delivered by the representative of Bahrain on behalf of the Group of Arab States and by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/68/PV.16).

The Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction (BWC) was the first multilateral convention to ban the use and production of an entire category of weapons of mass destruction. It has also been an important element in the efforts of the international community to combat the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, while at the same time recognizing the need to use bacteriological and biological materials for peaceful and humanitarian purposes.

While confirming Iraq’s comprehensive commitment to the Convention and its obligations, we call on Member States, particularly the developed countries, to step up their efforts to promote national implementation and confidence-building measures to enable States to build their capacities and assess developments in science and technology that are related to the Convention and to keep pace with the progress in the life sciences. The information-exchange process among States members is an important tool for strengthening transparency and building confidence.

In the light of the growing terrorist threat and the increasing potential for the use of biological materials by terrorist entities, we underscore the need to strengthen regional and international cooperation in

addressing and mitigating those threats. In that context, my delegation stresses the need to implement article 10 of the Convention on assistance to and cooperation with States. Article 10 is important to my country and many other States as we meet the challenges in that area. However, implementation is not easy and requires the intensive and joint cooperation of all States parties, whether they are providing or requesting assistance. Moreover, it is a long-term process requiring the development of innovative measures to guarantee full implementation.

I note that the challenges and obstacles confronting efforts to cooperate in such areas as international assistance and exchange in relation to biological sciences and technology require States parties to work together to develop the measures necessary to overcome such difficulties. In that context, I convey my country's appreciation of the decision taken at the seventh BWC Review Conference in 2011 to create a database to support requests for and offers of assistance. Iraq calls on all States parties to provide full support to the Convention's Implementation Support Unit so as to enable it to fully perform its tasks.

Iraq shares the concern of the international community over the proliferation of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons and their means of delivery, which constitutes a threat to international peace and security. At the same time, Iraq points to the need to implement and observe Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) in order to prevent such weapons from falling into the hands of terrorists and non-State actors.

In that context, we note that early this year Iraq submitted to the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1540 (2004) an updated report on all recently adopted national legislation, including with regard to the formation of the Iraqi national commission for monitoring weapons of mass destruction, as well as its decision to accede to the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism. Moreover, Iraq has recently acceded to the International Convention for the Suppression of Terrorist Bombings and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

Mr. Raza (Pakistan): Pakistan aligns itself with the statement made on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (see A/C.1/68/PV.16).

The Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) and the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) continue to

serve as key constituents of the international security architecture. Together, those Conventions have also strongly reinforced their roles as the international norm and a bulwark against the use of such weapons. Accordingly, those instruments have made an important contribution to the goal of general and complete disarmament.

These success stories reaffirm the vitality and value of treaties negotiated multilaterally on the basis of inclusiveness, good faith and equality, while taking into account the security interests of all States. It is the spirit of cooperative multilateralism that should guide the international community in navigating and addressing new and emerging challenges in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation.

Pakistan shares the concerns that, along with the threat of the possible production, acquisition and use of chemical and biological weapons by States, the international community also faces the danger of the production, acquisition and use of such weapons by non-State actors. The slow pace of chemical weapons disarmament and the existence of huge quantities of chemical weapons accentuate concerns about the possibility of their falling into the hands of terrorists. Realizing the full potential of the Convention for international peace and security necessitates the early elimination of remaining stockpiles by possessor States. The deplorable use of chemical weapons in Syria highlights such concerns.

While advances in biology offer a range of new tools to address diseases, they have also heightened anxieties over the possibility of non-State actors misusing biological toxin agents and related materials. Concluding the verification protocol to the BWC, which has been negotiated over eight years, would be a major step in strengthening the Convention and in addressing any concerns over the biodefence capabilities of some States. The full, effective and non-discriminatory implementation of the conventions, including export control measures, national physical protection and international assistance, as well as capacity-building, is a key tool to prevent non-State actors from acquiring, producing or using those weapons.

Pakistan welcomes the successful conclusion of the third CWC Review Conference. The consensus adoption of the outcome document reflects the continuing importance that States parties attach to the indispensable role of the CWC and its contribution to international peace and security. Pakistan also

welcomes the endorsement by the Security Council of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) Executive Council decision by the Security Council on chemical disarmament in Syria. The adoption of Security Council resolution 2118 (2013) helped to pave the way forward, including on the political track. Syria's decision to become a party to the CWC and its cooperation with the OPCW are also positive developments.

However, the goals of the Convention can be fully realized only when the Convention attains universality. States known to possess chemical weapons must be persuaded to renounce and destroy them. The provisions of the Convention relating to international cooperation and assistance are essential to keeping a large number of States without chemical industries engaged with the work of the OPCW. Cooperation in the field of assistance and protection provides the platform to a large number of developing countries to improve their capacities against the use or threat of use of chemical weapons.

Over the years, Pakistan has interacted closely with and extended full cooperation to the OPCW on a range of activities. In active collaboration with the Technical Secretariat, we have hosted several regional and international capacity-building courses in Pakistan. A subregional assistance and protection centre has been established in Pakistan to serve as a centre of excellence for countries of the region. Pakistan was also one of the first countries to support a national authority mentorship programme, and it is closely sharing with another State party our national experience in implementing the CWC.

Pakistan continues to believe that sensitive technologies and materials must be adequately controlled to ensure their use for peaceful purposes alone. However, that objective cannot justify practices and cartels that hinder legitimate trade in chemicals, equipment and trade among States parties for demonstratively peaceful purposes. It is vital to restore balance and even-handedness in the implementation of the Convention.

With regard to the future priorities of the OPCW, the original intent reflected in the Convention must be adhered to. The Convention establishes a hierarchy of threats that different types of chemicals and related facilities pose to the object and purpose of the Convention. Pakistan stresses the need to advance the

goals of the CWC in a comprehensive, balanced and non-discriminatory manner.

As a party to the BWC since 1974, Pakistan remains fully committed to its obligations under the Convention. Accordingly, Pakistan has taken a range of comprehensive legal and administrative steps to enhance its biosafety and biosecurity regulations through an inter-agency consultative process. BWC-enabling legislation is under review in the Parliament. Pakistan views confidence-building measures as a tool for increasing transparency and building trust and confidence among States parties in the implementation of the Convention. Pakistan has submitted its confidence-building measures for the year 2012, based on the revised forms, to the Implementation Support Unit. Confidence-building measures cannot, however, be a tool for assessing compliance by the States parties, for which the only method is a legally binding mechanism with verification provisions.

Pakistan welcomes the discussion on developments in science and technology related to the Convention as part of a standing agenda item mandated by article 12 of the Convention. Pakistan accords special importance to the full and effective implementation of article 10 of the Convention. The importance of this issue cannot be overstated in terms of efforts to keep the BWC relevant. The malign use of the biosciences can kill humans, animals and plants, trigger wars and disrupt infrastructure. Addressing those issues necessitates continued engagement with the scientific, medical, commercial and educational communities. A coordinated approach needs to be developed for the prevention of such misuse.

Yet at the same time, a balance must be struck between addressing new threats and keeping open avenues for assistance and cooperation. New discoveries in the field of biological sciences that make their application simpler and cheaper should be made widely available to the developing countries. The potential dual nature of the emerging technologies in that area should not be used as a pretext for proscribing or restricting their availability to developing countries. No steps should be taken to curb legitimate scientific inquiry or economic activity.

Mr. Wee Joon-Seok (Republic of Korea): The adoption of Security Council resolution 2118 (2013) marked an historic moment in that the Security Council finally came to a unified position on the crisis in Syria.

The Republic of Korea commends the intensive efforts made by the United States, the Russian Federation and Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to that end.

My delegation takes this opportunity to congratulate the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) on winning the 2013 Nobel Peace Prize, which I believe is an acknowledgement not only of its contribution of the past 16 years to the elimination of chemical weapons throughout the globe, but also of its vital role in verifying the destruction of the Syrian chemical-weapons programme. We highly commend the courage, dedication and professionalism of the joint mission team of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and the United Nations, working in the midst of dangerous situations in Syria.

It is encouraging to note that the initial verification activities in Syria are being conducted in an effective and efficient manner. Given the complexity of the destruction of Syria's chemical weapons and the ambitious goal to complete the destruction by the first half of the next year, my delegation attaches great importance both to the combined efforts of the OPCW and the United Nations and to the active support of Member States. In that regard, we welcome the fact that an increasing number of Member States are pledging voluntary contributions towards that noble task. The Government of the Republic of Korea fully supports the joint commission and will play its part in contributing to the successful completion of its mission.

As Security Council resolution 2118 (2013) made clear, the Syrian Government shall comply with all aspects of the relevant decisions of the OPCW and resolution 2118 (2013), and provide full cooperation to the joint mission, including unfettered access to all sites. It should be noted that in the event of non-compliance with resolution 2118 (2013), measures under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations will be imposed, as set out in the resolution.

The unanimous adoption of the Security Council resolution and the OPCW decision in the aftermath of the unacceptable use of chemical weapons in Syria reaffirm the strong consensus of the international community that the use of chemical weapons cannot be tolerated in any circumstances. We should seize that momentum to urge other countries, including North Korea, that have not yet acceded to the Chemical Weapons Convention to do so without delay and to join international efforts to prohibit and destroy chemical weapons.

The Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) is one of the cornerstones of the global disarmament and non-proliferation regime. However, compared to other conventions related to weapons of mass destruction, there are still many States outside the BWC. Achieving its universality continues to be the pending issue. My delegation would like to urge those States that have not yet joined the Convention to do so as soon as possible.

The faithful implementation of the Convention, along with its universality, is another pillar that strengthens the BWC regime. It is important that each State party translate the Convention into concrete and effective national measures. Given the dual-use nature and unprecedented rapid development of biotechnology, scientific bodies and relevant industries need to establish and abide by voluntary regulations, such as codes of conduct in the field, which can serve to complement States' basic obligations under the Convention.

International cooperation and assistance are another key building-block in advancing the objectives of the BWC. In that regard, the Republic of Korea has contributed to the Biosecurity Engagement Program of the Global Partnership against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction, in Afghanistan and in Indonesia, which aims to enhance the physical security of laboratories and thereby prevent terrorism or accidents associated with biological materials.

As for confidence-building and transparency measures, the Republic of Korea delegation welcomes the strengthened intersessional process, as agreed upon at the seventh Review Conference of the States Parties to the Biological Weapons Convention in 2011, which allows us to explore various ways to enhance transparency and further develop strong confidence among States. We believe that the final document of the seventh BWC Review Conference provides a solid basis for systematic and structured cooperation, and the intersessional process will further deepen and broaden mutual understanding. As we set our sights on making the eighth BWC review conference in 2016 another success, my delegation will actively participate in the intersessional discussions, especially when identifying all the necessary steps.

Mr. Virri (Finland): Finland fully aligns itself with the statement made by the observer of the European Union (see A/C.1/68/PV.16).

Countering weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) and their proliferation cannot be done without close national and international cooperation. Finland supports the central role of the United Nations in preventing the proliferation of WMDs and stresses the importance of the implementation of Security Council 1540 (2004). Since 2006, Finland has worked closely with the Henry L. Stimson Center in promoting the implementation of and universal adherence to resolution 1540 (2004).

The enhancement of biosecurity and countering biological threats are a vital element of the global non-proliferation agenda. Finland pursues close cooperation among the national and international health and security authorities when responding to questions related to biosecurity. Nationally, Finland emphasizes and invests in interagency cooperation. Since 2003, Finland has been a member of the Global Partnership against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction. Through the Global Partnership, we are looking at ways to advance biosecurity globally.

Besides non-proliferation, Finland also underlines the importance of disarmament mechanisms. Finland is a strong supporter of strengthening the Biological and Toxic Weapons Convention and the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC). The full universality of both Conventions is yet to be achieved. It is pertinent that all members of the international community effectively work towards universality. The CWC constitutes a near universal regime with 190 States parties. Nevertheless, more work needs to be done. Sixteen years after the entry into force of the CWC, 20 per cent of the stockpiles of chemical warfare agents are still left to be eliminated.

Today, in conjunction with the destruction of existing stockpiles, it is instrumental that the implementation of the CWC be carried out even more persistently, as the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and the United Nations work together to take stock of and destroy chemical weapons in Syria. Finland gives its full support to the important task of the OPCW and the United Nations in Syria. We would like to reiterate that Finland stands ready to contribute to the joint mission. As the OPCW's designated laboratory, the Finnish Institute for Verification of the Chemical Weapons Convention has supported the Syrian efforts by providing laboratory assistance to Dr. Åke Sellström's United Nations investigation mission. The Government of Finland values the trust that has been given to the Institute.

One might ask how the international community should maintain and strengthen CWC compliance. On Tuesday, 29 October, the Permanent Mission of Finland to the United Nations will organize a side event entitled "The challenge of chemical weapons" that will address that question. Speakers from the Office for Disarmament Affairs, the Finnish Institute for Verification of the Chemical Weapons Convention and the OPCW will address lessons learned from Syria and the role of the OPCW-designated laboratories in arms control. Ideally, the event will provide a forum for discussion on the future of the CWC.

I will finish by reiterating that Finland places great importance on disarmament and the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. We have sought vigorously to support international efforts and we will continue to do so in the future.

Mr. Blanco (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): While issues of disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation are a priority on the international agenda, recent months have shown their importance for the maintenance of international peace and security through the elimination of other weapons of mass destruction, in particular chemical weapons, in spite of the fact that they are prohibited through legally binding instruments and even in the context of customary law.

Colombia is strongly committed to disarmament and the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, as enshrined in article 81 of our political Constitution. Accordingly, in Colombia the manufacture, import, possession and use of chemical, biological and nuclear weapons are prohibited. That commitment is reaffirmed in the international arena, as Colombia is a State party to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and the Biological Weapons Convention, as well as a member of political forums and initiatives aimed at prohibiting those weapons.

In a well-deserved recognition of the 16 years of work of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) to realize the goals and objectives of the CWC and free humankind from the effects of those weapons, the Norwegian Nobel Committee awarded the Nobel Peace Prize to the OPCW. This is a timely opportunity to commend that wise decision and to reiterate Colombia's support for OPCW initiatives aimed at prohibiting chemical weapons, as a clear and consistent mechanism to strengthen peace and security on our planet. I take this opportunity to recognize in

particular the mission established by the Secretary-General to investigate the acts that occurred in recent months in the Syrian Arab Republic, as well as the OPCW inspection team that is carrying out its work in that country.

The recent use of chemical weapons in the context of a non-international armed conflict bitterly reminds us that the threat of weapons of mass destruction is not only latent, but a very real and possible threat. Regardless of the underlying motives for the use of such weapons, their use is inexcusable. They are not weapons designed for legitimate defence, nor do they make it possible to distinguish between combatants and civilians. Moreover, their use causes excessive and indiscriminate suffering. Colombia strongly condemns the use of such weapons in any circumstance.

The recent tragic events in the Syrian Arab Republic underscore the historic significance of the Chemical Weapons Convention and confirm its validity as the second multilateral treaty prohibiting an entire category of weapons of mass destruction and the first such instrument to establish a strict system of verification and inspection, without undermining the peaceful uses of chemistry and promoting international cooperation to that end. My country calls for the universalization of the Convention and the effective implementation of its four pillars: disarmament, non-proliferation, assistance and protection against chemical weapons, and international cooperation for peaceful uses.

With regard to implementation, Colombia has been working to strengthen its national capacities, promoting initiatives to provide training in cooperation with the OPCW. We have developed workshops and courses, not only with staff of the National Authority for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons but also in close public-private collaboration with the national chemical industry.

For my country, strict compliance with the commitments of the Convention is important, but it is also important to go further, promoting initiatives that will enable the development of best practices, for example in controlling dual-use substances. I am pleased to report that in September, Colombia hosted a regional training course on the technical aspects of the CWC transfer regime for customs authorities of the States parties in the Latin American and Caribbean region, which was attended by more than 20 States of my region. Immediately after, we carried out, with the assistance of the OPCW, the first national workshop for

declarations and inspections within the context of the Chemical Weapons Convention. That workshop was supported by Government officials and representatives of the national chemical industry, who made declarations in the light of article VI of the Convention.

Turning to biological weapons, my country is aware that the only way to eliminate that threat is through the universalization and effective application of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction. Since 1983, we have supported this undertaking by the international community through ratifying that Convention, and we invite States that have not yet adhered to it to do so. The Convention is the first multilateral disarmament treaty banning an entire category of weapons of mass destruction, and therein lies its historic importance for the entire disarmament and non-proliferation regime. Moreover, taking into account recent progress in bioscience and biotechnology, the Convention serves as an agreement of tremendous importance for the disarmament and non-proliferation architecture.

In connection with the implementation of the Biological Weapons Convention, let me point out that in addition to the obligations derived from it, specifically the timely presentation of reports on confidence-building measures, Colombia has undertaken national efforts for its effective implementation. Among them we highlight national workshops in 2011 and 2013, which were carried out thanks to the cooperation of the European Union. That training helped promote a better understanding of the obligations and duties taken on by Colombia as a State party to the Convention, established greater and better links with national entities involved in that area, and identified strategic actors in the scientific, academic and industrial communities.

We would also like to highlight the role played by the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean. Its experience and expertise have led to a report entitled "The National Authority for the Convention on Biological Weapons: regional and global experiences". Finally, and no less important, we have also enjoyed the support of, and we support in our turn, the Convention's Implementation Support Unit, whose work has been fundamental in promoting the universalization and effective implementation of the Convention.

With the aim of improving practices and going beyond the commitments made in order to ensure the effective implementation of the Biological Weapons Convention, Colombia has co-sponsored the Code of Conduct for Scientists and Institutions that was presented by Spain at a meeting of States parties to the Convention held in December 2012. We firmly support that initiative to establish high voluntary standards to promote the responsible conduct of all actors in the scientific community, industry, academia and decision-making with regard to the control of biological weapons.

I wish to draw attention to the fact that the use of weapons of mass destruction requires not only a load but also a launching system. Accordingly, we must not forget the as yet unregulated issue of missiles, in particular ballistic missiles. I would like to highlight that Colombia is a signatory to The Hague Code of Conduct against ballistic missile proliferation, which is a political instrument and a means for confidence and transparency among States.

We have also supported and implemented Security Council resolution 1540 (2004), which establishes the threat posed by weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems in the hands of non-State actors. That resolution is very important, as it effectively complements the binding instruments in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Accordingly, this year Colombia presented the third, updated report on the measures for national implementation of that resolution. It has also finalized — through strategic support provided by the Inter-American Committee against Terrorism and in keeping with the resolutions following resolution 1540 (2004) — a national plan of action to strengthen national capacities, which was submitted to the relevant committee.

To conclude, I invite States and organizations that are in a position to do so to help us in the implementation of that report. In the same vein, we offer our experiences for two-way collaboration with States that are engaged in similar processes. I thank you, Mr. Chairman, for this opportunity to reaffirm Colombia's commitment to the general and complete disarmament of weapons of mass destruction.

The Chair (*spoke in Arabic*): Once again, I call on all delegations to respect the time limits, failing which I shall be compelled to interrupt their statements.

Ms. García Guiza (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): An international system for peace and security that is strong and sustainable cannot and should not be based or built on weapons of mass destruction with indiscriminate or inhuman effects but rather on justice, international law and on the application of the rule of law. Therefore, the Biological Weapons Convention and the Chemical Weapons Convention are milestones in the international disarmament and non-proliferation architecture. They established fundamental norms and standards for the prohibition and elimination of inhuman agents of warfare and constituted progress toward attaining the global objectives of disarmament and non-proliferation.

The Chemical Weapons Convention has proven to be the most successful and advanced instrument of disarmament. It not only prohibits chemical weapons but also orders their destruction under a regime that constitutes the highest possible standard in the field of verification. In that connection, Mexico again congratulates the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) receiving the Nobel Peace Prize. That distinction reflects the broad recognition and acknowledgement of the outstanding work of that organization to ensure the elimination of chemical weapons as well as of the crucial role it has played in promoting a diplomatic solution to dismantle the chemical weapons arsenal in Syria, while at the same time strengthening multilateralism as the best way to the peaceful solution to international disputes.

The deplorable suffering caused by the use of chemical weapons in Syria compels the entire international community to consider the importance of ensuring that chemical arsenals worldwide are fully destroyed, as that is the only way to ensure those unacceptable events are never repeated.

This year, through Syria's and Somalia's adherence to the Chemical Weapons Convention, we have taken an important step towards universality of that instrument. We therefore encourage the countries that have not yet done so to adhere to the Convention without delay or any preconditions.

Mexico supports the unanimous decision adopted by the Executive Council of the OPCW to establish an unprecedented plan for the destruction of Syria's chemical weapons. Moreover, we recognize the mandate and work of the OPCW in that regard and the importance of preserving its stringent standards in

inspection, verification, transparency and destruction of weapons of mass destruction. The decision confirms the universal rejection of the use of those indiscriminate weapons and represents a powerful political signal on the strength and legitimacy of the universal norm of the prohibition of chemical weapons.

Mexico welcomes the fact that the decision of the OPCW Executive Council will lead to progress in other initiatives and diplomatic efforts aimed at achieving a peaceful and political solution to the crisis in Syria. We hope that the joint United Nations-OPCW mission currently deployed in Syria will be able to fulfil its mandate safely, effectively and without hindrance, with the support of the Syrian Government and in keeping with the modalities for cooperation within the capacities of both organizations, as proposed by the Secretary-General and supported by the Security Council. Mexico also acknowledges and supports the mandate conferred on the Secretary-General in resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council to investigate events where the use of chemical weapons is suspected. This mandate must be strengthened in future.

As of this year, the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) will have been in force for 41 years. We welcome the progress made towards the universalization of that instrument, which is based on the need to completely exclude any possible use of biological agents as weapons of war. We must reaffirm the universal rejection of the terrible effects and humanitarian consequences of the development and use of biological weapons and reiterate the importance of ensuring that they can never be used again by any actor under any circumstance.

To that end, Mexico underscores the need to promote the process of epidemiological surveillance and early warning of epidemic outbreaks and potential pandemics at national, regional and international levels, and the need for cooperation and information exchange in that area. National capacities in detection, preparation and early response must be strengthened so that in the case of an attack, cooperation will be as effective as possible. Those are the major challenges faced by the international community of the twenty-first century.

We regret that to date States parties have been unable to reach the minimum agreements to enable the development of the tools necessary to confirm implementation of the Convention and compliance with it through verification mechanisms. It is

imperative that parties to the Convention have legal and political certainty with respect to compliance with its provisions. My country has consistently repeated that, given the lack of a compliance-verification mechanism, confidence-building measures are of the utmost importance.

I would like to conclude by reaffirming the relevance that my country attaches to the need to ensure greater involvement by and participation of civil society, as well as of the scientific, academic and private sectors, in the promotion and implementation of the Biological and Chemical Weapons Conventions. Progress in disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control will be achieved only when all of the voices of civil society that are advocating change worldwide can be heard.

Mr. Yermakov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The Russian Federation consistently and actively favours universalization of the international regimes for the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, with the aim of firm, comprehensive compliance with commitments made under the treaties in that domain, including the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BWC).

The Russian Federation vehemently condemns the use of chemical weapons in Syria. We believe that such action, by whomever it was committed, is absolutely unacceptable and that all perpetrators must be brought to justice. We fully share the fundamental political assessments in that respect contained in the decision of the Executive Council of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) of 27 September and Security Council resolution 2118 (2013).

All of us — above all, the Syrian State itself — have succeeded in overcoming the negative trend of events and getting developments back on the right track. Regarding that situation, we still wish to appeal to all interested States to refrain from unsubstantiated, irresponsible and, at times, simply false statements. Until the investigation is concluded, we can make only unofficial assumptions as to who so unprofessionally, from a military point of view, used homemade chemical ammunition that was not even in the possession of the Syrian army. The only known fact is that such weapons were used, and the Syrian State had the least to gain

by their use. That is the only clear and universally recognized fact. All of the rest, for now, is simply conjecture.

The current position of the Syrian leadership is exceptionally noble and bold. In the extremely complex internal political situation, Syria has been able to take a truly historic decision and renounce its chemical weapons, which for the State were of strategic significance in terms of maintaining national security. It has begun full destruction of all of its chemical-weapon arsenals under the fully formed supervision of the OPCW and in the face of unprecedentedly short deadlines. The steps being taken by Damascus merit respect and comprehensive support. They are a very good example and lesson to all the other States in the region that remain outside the NPT, CWC and BWC frameworks.

Against that positive backdrop, it is most unfortunate that there have been attempts, even here in the First Committee, to accuse the Syrian Government of using chemical weapons. It is reminiscent of the equally reprehensible and unsubstantiated statements of recent years that the 11 September 2001 tragedy was not the work of terrorists, but was something else. I therefore call upon everyone to refrain from such irresponsible statements, at least from the United Nations rostrum. We must remember that all of our statements will be thoroughly studied subsequently, including by those who come after us. Certainly we will all have to account for irresponsibly spoken words.

We should remember that in Syria there is no struggle to establish democracy, but rather an armed insurgency between the Government and the opposition in a multi-faith country. There are not many champions of democracy there, and that is well known, but there are plenty of extremists of all types among the opposition. The internal confrontation that has been fuelled by supplies of weapons to the opposition from the outset has already evolved into one of the bloodiest conflicts of modern times. All here are well aware of what weapons have been supplied to the extremists in Syria, and when, and who has supplied them.

The negative developments in Syria and foreign military intervention could lead to increased numbers of innocent victims and escalation of the conflict far beyond Syria. We can envision an undermining of multilateral efforts to resolve the Iranian nuclear problem and to settle the Arab-Israeli conflict. They could lead to further destabilization throughout the

Middle East and North Africa. Who would want that? It is fraught with the risk of imbalancing the entire system of international law and order.

In that situation, we cannot even discuss which weapons are involved, let alone speak of further steps toward true disarmament. We continue to believe that in the current complex, turbulent world, maintaining law and order is one of the few levers capable of stopping international relations from spiraling into chaos. The law is the law; each person is legally bound to uphold the law, regardless of whether they like it or not. The existing international law allows for the use of force in only two instances: in the case of self-defence or in accordance with a decision of the Security Council. Under the Charter of the United Nations, anything else is considered as aggression.

Events in Syria confirm the relevance of full universalization of the CWC as the most effective specialized multilateral instrument. We call on all of those still outside the international legal sphere of the NPT, the CWC and the BWC and other agreements to follow the valuable example of Syria and immediately accede to those most important international arrangements, without any preconditions — as Syria has done.

The priority of preventing weapons of mass destruction from falling into the hands of non-State actors is a given. In that context, we note the necessity of all States implementing the requirements of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) in full.

Mr. Sano (Japan): Japan has expressed its deep concern over the recent use of chemical weapons in Syria, which is not permissible under any circumstances. Therefore, we welcome the unanimous adoption of Security Council resolution 2118 (2013), which reinforced the decision of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), as well as the establishment of the OPCW-United Nations joint mission as a basis for concrete steps to eliminate those inhumane weapons.

Japan strongly urges the Government of Syria to comply faithfully and fully with the chemical-weapons elimination programme set forth in the decision of the OPCW Executive Council and the Security Council resolution. Japan will provide a wide range of support and the greatest possible cooperation in the international community's endeavour to dispose of chemical weapons in Syria.

Japan congratulates the OPCW on winning the Nobel Peace Prize, which shows the wide recognition of the OPCW and expectations of it regarding its contribution to the total prohibition and non-proliferation of chemical weapons globally.

While we highly commend the wide adherence to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), with 190 States parties joining, its universalization has become increasingly important, given the current international security environment. We praise the continued efforts of the major chemical-weapon possessor States towards the destruction of their stockpiles. With the verifiable destruction of more than three quarters of all declared stockpiles of chemical weapons, that still remains the core objective of the Convention.

In order to cope with the rapid changes in the international security environment, it is high time for the Committee to ponder the future of the CWC. In that regard, Japan welcomes the final report of the third Review Conference of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention and stresses the importance of implementing the recommendations in the report.

We have taken our obligations under the CWC seriously. Thus Japan is committed to the destruction of abandoned chemical weapons in China and has achieved significant progress through steady and sustained efforts. We have invested enormous human and financial resources to address the unprecedented and technically challenging tasks in the destruction of such abandoned weapons. The results are evident. Japan has destroyed more than 37,000 abandoned chemical weapons with mobile destruction facilities deployed in China. Moreover, we have been preparing earnestly to set up additional destruction facilities. With the close cooperation with China, Japan is resolved to fully complete the destruction of all abandoned chemical weapons and will do its utmost to that end.

The rapid advancement in biotechnology has benefited mankind, but at the same time biothreats posed by the misuse or illicit use of advanced science and technology, particularly by non-State actors, have been growing. In that context, universalization of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BWC) has become more important than ever before for international security.

Japan welcomes the valuable discussion during the recent intercessional process of the Review Conference. We will contribute to the discussion to produce

concrete results on each agenda item of the next review conference, namely, cooperation and assistance under article X of the BWC, review of developments in the field of science and technology related to the Convention, strengthening national implementation, enabling fuller participation in confidence-building measures, and strengthening implementation of article VII.

In order to strengthen the BWC, Japan, as a leading country in the field of life sciences and a member of the group of States that comprises Japan, Australia, Canada, the Republic of Korea, Switzerland, Norway and New Zealand, will actively participate in the various BWC topics under discussion. Japan will carry on its efforts to strengthen BWC implementation, with special focus on responses to the rapid advances in science and technology related to the Convention and the dual-use issues involved therein.

Mr. Joković (Croatia): Since this is the first time my delegation is taking the floor, allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as the Chair of the First Committee and to extend our congratulations to the members of the Bureau. Allow me also to assure you of my delegation's full support to our work throughout the sixty-eighth session.

Croatia fully associates itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union (see A/C.1/68/PV.16), but allow me to make some additional remarks in my national capacity.

Prevention and suppression of potential attacks using materials related to weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) is one of the essential contributions to world peace and security. We have been continuously devoted to that goal. Its geographical position makes Croatia vulnerable, if we are not extremely careful, to becoming a transit country for the smuggling of materials related to weapons of mass destruction. Based on that evaluation of possible threats, at the beginning of this year Croatia adopted a national strategy and action plan for combating WMDs. Our strategy can serve as a model that other countries in similar geopolitical environments might use to prepare their own national strategies. We stand ready to share our experience in that field with countries in the south-east region of Europe.

Since 1 July, the Croatian position in the European Union (EU) chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear Centres of Excellence initiative has changed. As a new EU member State, Croatia has become a partner

and provider country instead of a beneficiary country. In support of the EU Centres of Excellence initiative, the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs hosted in Zagreb, at the beginning of October last year, an international meeting on the mitigation of chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear threats.

In the areas of non-proliferation of WMDs and other WMD threats, Croatia, together with Poland, has conducted a peer review for the effective implementation of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004). We see that activity not just as an important support to further increase our national capacities and not just as a mechanism for strengthening our bilateral cooperation. Above all, it was intended to serve as a contribution to all United Nations Members in identifying universal effective practices.

The peer review conducted by Croatia and Poland in June this year in Zagreb and in Warsaw in October is a pilot project with the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. It is a very new approach and has strong potential in putting together common knowledge and expertise resulting in added value to global needs in the implementation of resolution 1540 (2004). We hope that other countries will recognize the benefits of peer review cooperation and that it will become a new successful model of cooperation.

In addition, in May this year Croatia hosted the Annual NATO Conference on WMD Arms Control, Disarmament and Non-Proliferation. The Conference, NATO's largest outreach activity with partners, gathered senior non-proliferation officials from more than 50 countries and international organizations. It provided an opportunity for an open and in-depth informal debate on the future of multilateral non-proliferation regimes and initiatives, current regional proliferation threats and challenges, terrorism and NATO's contribution to international efforts in the area of WMD non-proliferation.

In addition, Croatia and the United States will co-host the Southeast European Regional Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) Executive Table Top Exercise in Zagreb in November. The exercise seeks to improve our abilities to meet WMD-proliferation challenges in the region, to fulfil our PSI commitments and our obligations under various Security Council resolutions and other international frameworks, and to enhance regional non-proliferation cooperation and coordination.

To conclude, we would like to emphasize that recent horrifying events are a reminder that the work of the international community in the fight against the weapons of mass destruction is not over. We have to admit to ourselves that the threat of terrorism related to WMDs is unfortunately present and that no nation or territory is excluded from that threat.

Mr. Kumar (India): India attaches high importance to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC). They are examples of non-discriminatory treaties in the field of disarmament that could effectively lead to the total elimination of chemical and biological weapons of mass destruction. Those treaties are indeed historic in the sweep of their vision and the unity of purpose that inspired them.

India associates itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (see A/C.1/68/PV.16).

Recent events in Syria have demonstrated the importance of the complete destruction and elimination of chemical-weapons stockpiles in the world as soon as possible and the need to ensure that terrorists and non-State actors are prevented from acquiring access to those weapons. The use of chemical weapons anywhere and by anyone must be condemned, and the international norm against the use of chemical weapons must be rigorously enforced. India supports the ongoing efforts of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) for the expedited destruction and elimination of chemical-weapon stockpiles in Syria.

India served as the Chair of the Executive Council leading up to the third Review Conference of the OPCW and welcomes the adoption of the final report of the Conference by consensus. We welcome the clear expression of the international community's conviction in the third Review Conference document that the CWC has reinforced its role as the international norm against chemical weapons and has made a major contribution to international peace and security by seeking a total exclusion of the possibility of use of chemical weapons. The Review Conference also expressed the determination that the destruction of all categories of chemical weapons should be completed in the shortest possible time in accordance with the provisions of the Convention.

India reaffirms that disarmament is a primary goal of the Chemical Weapons Convention and should

remain our priority until the complete destruction of all chemical weapons is achieved. India completed the destruction of its chemical-weapons stockpiles in 2009 as per its obligations and within the stipulated time frame under the CWC. We believe that all possessor States should likewise fulfil their obligations within the shortest possible time.

Universality is also fundamental to the success of the Convention. Full, effective and non-discriminatory implementation of article XI is essential for the realization of the object and purpose of the Convention.

With its large and growing chemical industry, India has the second largest number of declared facilities, and the filing of chemical industry declarations has been exemplary indeed. India receives one of the largest number of inspections from the OPCW, and we have ensured a flawless track record of verification inspections. At the same time, we believe that the OPCW needs to evolve transparent and objective criteria and modalities for inspections. The provisions of the Convention should be implemented in a manner that does not hinder legitimate activities, especially in countries like India with a large and growing chemical industry.

We join other delegations in conveying our felicitations to the OPCW on being awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

India is committed to improving the effectiveness of the Biological Weapons Convention and strengthening its implementation and universalization. We believe that is necessary in view of the new challenges to international peace and security emanating from proliferation trends, including the threat posed by terrorists and other non-State actors seeking access to biological agents for terrorist activities. We welcome the accession of Cameroon, Nauru, Guyana and Malawi to the BWC this year.

One critical area in which the BWC is found inadequate concerns an effective mechanism for verification of compliance. In a multilateral treaty such as the BWC, verification of compliance is critically important for States parties to be collectively assured that the provisions of the Convention are being implemented by all States parties. Only a multilaterally agreed mechanism for verification of compliance can provide assurance of the observance of compliance obligations by States parties and act as a deterrence against non-compliance.

The seventh Review Conference mandated the current intersessional programme to consider three standing agenda items and two items on a biennial basis. We appreciate the chairmanship of Algeria in 2012 and Hungary in 2013 for providing purposeful initiatives through the intersessional meetings.

India believes that it is critical for the success of the BWC that the commitments and obligations under the Convention are fully and effectively implemented. India has a broad-based regulatory framework to prevent the misuse of biological science and technology. We believe that confidence-building measures are an important transparency measure to enhance trust in implementation of the Convention, but they cannot be a substitute for a multilaterally agreed mechanism for verification of compliance. In that regard, the decisions taken by the seventh Review Conference should be respected so as not to upset the balance in priorities of States parties.

One of the issues that concerns both the Biological Weapons Convention and the Chemical Weapons Convention, and to which India attaches due importance, is that of export controls. India has strong and law-based national export controls, which ensure all our obligations under these Conventions and commitments under Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) are met. India filed its report on resolution 1540 (2004) in November 2004 and has since submitted periodic updates, the last being in 2013. India has actively engaged with the Australia Group and other export-control regimes with a view to seeking full membership.

Finally, India is committed to maintaining the highest international standards with reference to control of chemical, biological and toxic items.

Mr. Yin Haigang (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): This year has witnessed new developments in the implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction (CWC). The third Review Conference of the States Parties proceeded smoothly. It conducted a comprehensive review of the implementation of the CWC in the past five years, and planned for the future work of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). Somalia and the Syrian Arab Republic acceded to the Convention, further strengthening its universality. China welcomes those positive developments.

Meanwhile, the OPCW is still faced with major challenges in promoting the destruction of chemical weapons and abandoned chemical weapons by both possessor States parties and abandoning States parties. The Syrian chemical-weapons issue has evoked extensive ongoing concerns in the international community, which further highlights the significance of the Convention's full and effective implementation. I would like to reiterate here that China has consistently upheld the objectives and purposes of the Convention, fully and strictly implementing its obligations under the Convention, supporting the continuous enhancement of its universality, committing itself to the complete prohibition and thorough destruction of chemical weapons, and opposing their proliferation.

I would like to elaborate China's position on the following three major issues.

First, in the world today, large amounts of declared chemical-weapons stockpiles and abandoned chemical weapons have yet to be destroyed. China holds the position that the destruction of chemical weapons should continue to be the core missions of the Convention and the OPCW. The OPCW should ensure adequate resources for the verification of destruction, and should urge the possessor States parties and abandoning States parties to complete the destruction within the timelines set up by the relevant resolutions and the destruction plan. Under this condition, industry verification, assistance and protection against chemical weapons, and international cooperation should be promoted in a balanced manner.

Secondly, the complete and thorough destruction of the chemical weapons abandoned by Japan on the territory of China — hereafter referred to as "Japanese ACWs" — also has an important bearing on the core objective and credibility of the Convention. Almost 70 years have passed since the end of the Japanese war of aggression against China, and 16 years since the entry into force of the Convention. Japanese ACWs still pose a great threat and cause real harm to the lives and property of the Chinese people and the environment. Frequent incidences of human casualties caused by Japanese ACWs have demonstrated the real threat they pose, even that of the chemical-weapons stockpile.

It is regrettable that Japan failed to complete the destruction of ACWs within the CWC timeline. China urges Japan to fully comply with relevant Executive Council decisions, to increase inputs and no efforts to

complete the destruction at the earliest possible date, according to the destruction plan agreed by China and Japan and Executive Council decisions. China welcomes the continued follow-up by OPCW and the international community of the Japanese ACWs issue and their promotion of relevant processes.

Thirdly, China welcomes the decision and resolution adopted, respectively, by the Executive Council of the OPCW and the Security Council on the issue of Syrian chemical weapons and hopes they will be fully implemented. The international community and relevant parties should make active efforts to create favourable conditions for the destruction of chemical weapons in Syria.

China supports the positive role played by the OPCW in the destruction of chemical weapons in Syria and is willing to provide active assistance in that regard. Mr. Wang Yi, China's Foreign Minister, speaking at the current session of the General Assembly (see A/68/PV.15), announced that China stands ready to make financial contributions to the OPCW for the destruction of chemical weapons in Syria and will send experts to join the OPCW team for the verification of the destruction of chemical weapons in Syria.

Mr. Sarki (Nigeria): My delegation would like to congratulate you again on your election, Mr. Chairman, and assure you of our continued support and cooperation.

Nigeria would also like to associate itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (see A/C.1/68/PV.16).

Let me also join previous speakers in commending the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) on its being awarded of the 2013 Nobel Peace Prize.

Nigeria recognizes the importance of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) not only in preventing the proliferation of chemical weapons, but also in its concerted efforts towards the total destruction of stockpiles across the world. In that regard, let me take this opportunity to congratulate the OPCW for the strides made in the past 15 years, particularly the guidance provided to countries by its management, administration and technical expert team. We also welcome the tireless efforts and leadership of Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon and the key role played by the United Nations staff.

Having signed and ratified the CWC, Nigeria remains committed to fulfilling its obligations with regard to the overall objectives of promoting and verifying adherence to the Convention on the significant issue of the prohibition of the use of chemical weapons and their destruction. Nigeria signed the Convention on 13 January 1993 and ratified it on 1 March 1999. My country also became a signatory to the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BWC) on 10 July 1972 and ratified it the following year. We therefore support meaningful action to strengthen the objectives of those Conventions. In that regard, we congratulate Cameroon, Guyana, Malawi, the Marshall Islands and Nauru for becoming States parties to the Biological Weapons Convention in the last year.

As a member of the OPCW Executive Council, and having recently been appointed as Chair of the OPCW's Open-Ended Working Group on Terrorism, Nigeria continues to support OPCW initiatives for the universalization of the ban on the use of chemical weapons. We acceded to the universality of the CWC and have worked assiduously to ensure strict adherence to its ethos. It remains a unique instrument of multilateral disarmament. We note the OPCW's phenomenal growth from the initial 65 member States to the present near-universal membership of 190 member States. We urge the remaining United Nations Member States that have not yet acceded to the treaty to commence the process towards ratification and membership.

My delegation wishes to place on record its commendation for the decisive approach with which the OPCW experts collaborated with the United Nations to address the reported, and very unfortunate, case of the use of chemical weapons in Syria. Nigeria remains strongly committed to steps and measures to prevent a re-emergence of the use of chemical weapons under any situation. We therefore welcome the decision by the Government of Syria to hand over its chemical-weapons stockpiles for destruction.

In furtherance of its commitment and obligations to the CWC, Nigeria hosted the annual Meeting of the National Authorities of States Parties in Africa in 2005. It has proposed hosting a regional and national sensitization workshop, in collaboration with the OPCW between the last quarter of 2013 and the second quarter of 2014. Indeed, Nigeria has benefitted from a number of programmes organized by the OPCW and will continue to participate in sponsored capacity-building programmes, including those involving exchange of

scientific and technical information for purposes not prohibited under the Convention.

My delegation takes this opportunity to seek the cooperation of all States parties to the CWC in working together for the realization of a total ban on the production, acquisition and stockpiling of chemical weapons, including the prevention of the emergence of new types of such weapons of mass destruction.

As a State party, Nigeria recognizes the gains of a faithful implementation of the CWC and the BWC. In that regard, we will continue to fulfil our obligations towards the promotion of the universalization of those Conventions, particularly the CWC. That commitment includes the enactment of enabling laws presently under the consideration by our National Assembly. We are optimistic that there will be a positive outcome of the efforts mounted by the National Authority on the Chemical and Biological Weapons Conventions to promulgate legislation on the two Conventions.

Let me at this juncture assure the Committee of Nigeria's continued commitment to the ideals of the CWC and the BTWC and urge all Member States, be they States parties or non-States parties, to make a similar commitment. That is necessary if we are to avoid the pitfall of the use of chemical weapons, under supposed threat or alleged provocation. The OPCW has demonstrated the capacity to ensure the destruction of chemical weapons, provided the stockpiles are declared.

Mr. O'Reilly (Ireland): Ireland aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union (see A/C.1/68/PV.16). I wish to add the following comments in my national capacity.

This year has brought us a stark reminder of the direct relevance of the work done in this and other disarmament forums to the lives of individuals. The use of chemical weapons in Syria is utterly reprehensible. The subsequent actions of the Syrian authorities to accede to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and to destroy Syria's arsenal of chemical weapons are welcome. However, those responsible for the appalling loss of life must be brought to account. Ireland has called for the referral of war crimes in Syria to the International Criminal Court, and we reiterate that call now. Syria must also continue to demonstrate its commitment to the Chemical Weapons Convention by fully implementing all of its obligations and undertakings under the terms of Security Council resolution 2118 (2013).

The joint mission in Syria of the United Nations and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) has had a positive start, and destruction activities have already begun. Ireland urges all parties to maintain the positive attitude demonstrated so far and equally to do all they can to facilitate the mission as it takes its work forward. Ireland has already contributed €200,000 to the trust fund established by the OPCW to support destruction activities in Syria, and we will examine what additional support we might be able to provide, either financial or in kind, when ongoing needs are fully determined.

The third Review Conference of the Chemical Weapons Convention was held in April this year. Its successful conclusion demonstrates the near-universal consensus against chemical weapons. With two accessions since that Conference, now only six States are not party to the CWC. Ireland calls on them to ratify or accede to the Convention as quickly as possible.

The Review Conference also highlighted the need for States to ensure effective implementation of their obligations under the Convention. Only by ensuring that comprehensive implementation measures are in place can we be confident that neither States nor non-State actors can circumvent the global ban on chemical weapons. Equally, all States must meet their commitments regarding destruction, and those States that have not been able to meet the deadlines for destruction established in the Convention must continue to work in accordance with the measures agreed at the sixteenth session of the Conference of the States Parties and relevant arrangements with the OPCW.

The awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to the OPCW is a welcome recognition of the success of the Chemical Weapons Convention and the OPCW in bringing us close to the complete elimination of chemical weapons. I reiterate our congratulations to the Director-General of the OPCW and his predecessors and to the entire staff of the OPCW.

Chemical weapons have, for obvious reasons, dominated much of the attention of the multilateral system this year, but of course we must also recall developments elsewhere. Under the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BWC) there is ongoing consideration of efforts to ensure that the threat of biological weapons never becomes a reality. The ongoing work to improve both the substance of transparency and confidence-building measures and the overall level of participation in those measures is

important in that respect. Indeed, so also are efforts to improve the level of adherence to the BWC, and the addition of five new States parties in the past year is a very welcome development.

I would also recall in that regard our support for the measures outlined in Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) and subsequent resolutions. The full implementation of the steps identified therein would help not only to prevent the acquisition of weapons of mass destruction by non-State actors, but also to implement obligations effectively under both the BWC and the Chemical Weapons Convention.

The proliferation of ballistic missiles represents a threat to international peace and security both in its own right and as a potential means of delivery of weapons of mass destruction. Ireland adheres to The Hague Code of Conduct, along with 135 other States. We encourage all States to adhere to the Code. We also believe that effective export controls must form part of efforts to prevent missile proliferation, and in that context the Missile Technology Control Regime has an important role to play.

Developments this year have reminded us how important the removal of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) from the world's arsenals is. We have an opportunity now to pursue the goal of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction. Ireland supports the tireless efforts of Ambassador Laajava of Finland to convene a conference on the establishment of that zone, and we call on all parties to participate. The temptation to use WMDs will exist as long as the weapons themselves exist. We must redouble our efforts to remove that temptation for good.

Mr. Kılıç (Turkey): As we continue our deliberations, we are once again discussing an issue that should already belong in the annals of history. As we have repeated time and again, weapons of mass destruction do not guarantee the security of any country, but rather increase insecurity and instability. All types of weapons of mass destruction should be urgently eliminated, and their names should be pronounced in discussions only to remind ourselves and future generations of the catastrophes they could have, and have, brought about, so that they are never used again.

Fortunately, we have jointly taken bold steps to agree to dismantle and to never use such weapons again. The 1925 Geneva Protocol, the Chemical Weapons

Convention (CWC), and the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BWC) are among such efforts. Turkey is party to all three multilateral instruments that guide the norms regarding the cluster under discussion today and does not hold, develop or conduct any research on such weapons.

The existence of chemical weapons in the world and especially in the Middle East is a major concern for Turkey, countries in the region and the international community as a whole. Unfortunately, chemical weapons have been used three times in the past three decades in our immediate neighbourhood. Sadly, the last time was this very year, more than a decade into the twenty-first century. We are once again faced with appalling images, reminding us of the indiscriminate and inhumane nature of such weapons. The tragic event that took place in Damascus on 21 August was an attack not only on its victims, but against the very basic principles and values on which human civilization is built. It was a horrendous crime against humanity and a violation of international law. Its perpetrators must be promptly brought to justice.

We welcome the agreement on the Framework for Elimination of Syrian Chemical Weapons reached in Geneva on 14 September and the ensuing Security Council resolution 2118 (2013), reinforcing the decision of the Executive Council of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). The placement of the chemical-weapons inventory under international control and the weapons' destruction are important in terms of eliminating a threat against regional and global peace and security.

On the other hand, the lessons learned throughout many conflicts, including that in Syria, oblige us to act with caution and vigilance. The lengthiness of the envisaged process must not be abused to gain time. It is now the responsibility of the Security Council and the international community at large to follow vigorously the implementation of the Framework agreement in accordance with the timetable agreed at the OPCW. Moreover, the process should not be perceived as the final solution to the conflict. It should not be forgotten that the greatest sum of Syrian casualties are caused by conventional weapons.

The process of eliminating chemical weapons in Syria is a stark reminder of the importance of universalizing and effectively implementing the CWC and of the key role that the OPCW plays and

its efficiency. We welcome the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize for 2013 to the OPCW, which has been undertaking such an important mission in the name of humanity, and we extend our heartfelt congratulations to its dedicated staff, under the able leadership of its Director-General, Ambassador Ahmet Üzümcü.

Turkey attaches great importance to the Biological Weapons Convention, its universalization and full implementation. The spread and transfer of dual-use goods and technology that can be used to produce biological weapons and the possibility of them falling into the hands of terrorists are a major concern for the international community. Considered with other weapons of mass destruction, the fact that those agents are so easy to attain has made such concerns all the more significant.

Confidence-building measures remain an important instrument to promote the purpose of the BWC. Although considerably improved, the submission of reports has not increased to a desirable level. Reports on confidence-building measures are valuable tools for mutual understanding and transparency. We should strive to make tangible use of that source of information.

We believe that scientific and technological developments should also be taken into account. Awareness of innovations in the life sciences and of their implications for the BWC is necessary to address the complex challenges in that area. Unfortunately, the Convention lacks a verification regime like that for the CWC, which would be a very useful mechanism. We consider that such a mechanism would contribute to strengthening the Convention's effectiveness. The 2013 Biological Weapons Convention Meeting of Experts last August identified some important issues that will help further advance our work at the upcoming Meeting of States Parties.

The international community must continue to do its utmost to prevent the acquisition of biological and chemical warfare agents by terrorists, other unauthorized actors or even States, and for their stockpiles to be destroyed. The universalization and effective implementation of both the CWC and the BWC must be a priority. We call on all countries to ratify and implement those two important instruments. We also support the strengthening of the implementation of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004), which is a key instrument to prevent the acquisition of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) by non-State actors.

In that context, regional approaches that pave the way for eventual universality should be utilized. Turkey has been actively promoting the establishment of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East. We would like to express once again our disappointment that the conference could not be held in 2012, and our expectation is for it to be convened as soon as possible. We urge all States of the region to participate in it in a spirit of cooperation and flexibility.

We have to strive to emphasize the progressive face of humankind and to not repeat past horrendous mistakes. That is even more true now that we live in a new age, in which we have the necessary legal instruments, information, experience, technology and other tools at our disposal for sense and humanity to prevail and, as a result, for all WMDs to find their due place in the dark pages of history.

Mr. Shishechiha (Islamic Republic of Iran): My delegation associates itself with the statement made by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) (see A/C.1/68/PV.16).

The use of chemical weapons in Syria was a very heartbreaking incident. It revealed once again the horrific nature of those weapons and proved once more that we should spare no efforts to abolish such inhuman weapons. Any use of chemical weapons runs counter to the letter and spirit of the 1925 Geneva Protocol and the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), as well as customary international law. The Islamic Republic of Iran condemns in the strongest possible terms the use of chemical weapons by anyone anywhere under any circumstances.

Iran is the main victim of the use of chemical weapons in contemporary history. As a result of more than 400 attacks with chemical-warfare agents during the eight-year war imposed by Saddam against Iran from 1980 to 1988, more than 100,000 Iranian citizens were either martyred or injured. That includes more than 7,000 injuries among civilians as a result of nearly 30 attacks on Iranian cities and villages.

In one instance, on 28 June 1987, Saddam's warplanes unleashed sulphur mustard gas bombs on four residential areas of Sardasht, a town in the north-west of Iran. As a result, more than 130 unprotected civilians were martyred and almost 5,000 injured, who still continue to suffer from long-term complications, including lung cancer. The anniversary of the tragedy

is commemorated in Iran as the National Day for the Campaign against Chemical and Biological Weapons.

Furthermore, in 2010, the Executive Council of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) invited the OPCW Director-General to deliver, on behalf of the OPCW, a statement on 28 June annually to the authorities and inhabitants of the city of Sardasht in memory of the chemical-weapons attacks thereon and to express sympathy for the victims.

In implementation of that decision, in the past three years, the OPCW Director-General has made statements on the anniversary of the tragedy. While conveying sincere sympathies to the authorities and people of the city of Sardasht, he stated that "Our hearts go out to those who continue to bear the painful consequences of exposure to chemical weapons". He further reaffirmed our resolve to rid the world permanently of the threat of chemical weapons and to guarantee that chemical weapons are never used again.

Needless to say, Saddam's army could not produce those inhuman weapons without the assistance and support of other countries. According to well-documented evidence, over 450 companies — mostly from Western countries, including the United Kingdom, France, the Netherlands and the United States — were involved in the development of Saddam's chemical-weapons programme. Given that all of those companies were under the scrutiny of their Governments, they could not transfer chemical weapons precursors to Saddam without their Governments' blessing. Indeed, the use of chemical-warfare agents — particularly against civilians, mostly women and children — is a clear manifestation of war crimes and crimes of genocide. Indeed, those who had helped Saddam's chemical-weapons programme are responsible for such crimes, too.

Being aware of the inhuman nature of chemical weapons, Iran not only actively participated in the negotiations of the Chemical Weapons Convention in Geneva, but was among the first countries that signed and ratified the treaty. Iran continues to strongly support the full, effective, non-discriminatory implementation of the Convention, in particular of its article XI. In that regard, we call for full implementation of the decision on the subject by the relevant decision-making organs of the OPCW. My delegation also welcomes the successful conclusion of the third Special Session

of the Conference of the States Parties to Review the Operation of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

The total destruction of chemical-weapon stockpiles remains the key objective of the CWC. In that context, and as reflected in the decisions of the OPCW's policymaking organs, the major possessor States parties that are not in compliance with the final extended deadline of 29 April 2012 are required to embark on sustained and accelerated efforts, within the framework of the CWC and its verification regimes, to achieve full compliance with their obligations under the Convention. Such obvious non-compliance has seriously challenged the Convention's credibility and *raison d'être*. Iran considers the major possessor States parties' non-compliance with the 2012 final extended deadline for the total destruction of their chemical weapons to be a setback in the operation of the Convention.

As a State party to all major international treaties banning weapons of mass destruction, Iran also attaches greatest importance to the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC). We fully support its objectives and call for its full, effective, balanced and non-discriminatory implementation, particularly of article X, which is essential to achieving the Convention's purposes. Similarly, we strongly call for an end to arbitrary and politically motivated restrictions and to the systematic denial of the right of developing States parties to exchange equipment, materials, technology and know-how relating to the use of biological agents and toxins for peaceful purposes. They contradict the letter and spirit as well as the object and purpose of the Convention.

We strongly support NAM's position on the importance of strengthening the Convention through multilateral negotiations for a legally binding protocol, which unfortunately could not be concluded in 2001 because of the position of the United States, after years of negotiations. We continue to believe that this very important issue should be addressed in order to explore ways and means to respond to the international community's wish for early conclusion of such an instrument.

The Islamic Republic of Iran emphasizes its belief in a total ban on the use of biological weapons. While we appreciate the withdrawal of reservations to the 1925 Geneva Protocol by a number of States parties, we strongly support NAM's position in calling on States

that continue to maintain reservations to it to withdraw them without further delay.

My delegation believes that in dealing with such horrifying weapons, all our efforts should be directed at the noble objective of a world free of all weapons of mass destruction. In that context, the universality of the legally binding international instruments banning such weapons is of utmost importance. States that are party to those treaties should therefore take serious action to persuade non-parties to accede to them without further delay or preconditions. I wish to emphasize that States parties to those treaties, in their interactions with non-parties, should act in a manner that proves that being a party is an advantage and being a non-party is a real disadvantage. Needless to say, the introduction of disincentives for non-parties and ceasing to cooperate with them would encourage and facilitate the realization of the instruments' universality.

In that context, we call on all States parties to the treaties to remain fully committed to their obligation to refuse to transfer to non-parties any equipment, material, technology, know-how or scientific and technological information that could be used to develop weapons of mass destruction. In that regard, we are profoundly concerned about the biological cooperation of some BWC States parties with a non-party to the Convention, particularly cooperation between Canada and Israel. That cooperation contradicts the Convention's object and purpose and is counterproductive to achieving its universality.

I would like to take this opportunity to commend Syria's accession to the CWC, which is indeed is a welcome development. I should stress that the Syrian Government should be assisted by the United Nations, the OPCW and the international community in fulfilling its obligations under the Convention. At the same time, we wish to emphasize that the OPCW decision regarding Syria — which was adopted due to the unique situation in that country — should in no way affect the rights and obligations of the CWC States parties. We believe that Syria's accession to the CWC should be followed by others in its immediate neighbourhood, in order to further the noble objective of establishing a zone free of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East.

The Chair (*spoke in Arabic*): We have heard the last speaker on our list on the cluster on "Other weapons of mass destruction".

I will now open the floor for speakers on the cluster on "Outer space (disarmament aspects)". Before giving the floor to the first speaker, I would remind all delegations to kindly keep their statements brief in order to enable the Committee to complete its work within its deadline of 6 November.

Mr. Hasan (Bahrain) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to reaffirm the position of the Arab Group on the subject under consideration. We strongly believe that the use of outer space should be limited to peaceful purposes. The legal instruments designed to achieve that goal have played a positive part in enhancing the peaceful use of outer space and governing activities there, including through such relevant aspects as the prohibition of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and of other military activities in outer space.

Despite that, however, there is broad recognition that the international legal instruments dealing with the issue of outer-space armaments are insufficient and that the existing legal regime is not adequate to fully prevent an arms race in outer space. We therefore strongly support the establishment of a committee in the Conference on Disarmament to tackle the issue through an inclusive and balanced programme of work. We believe that such a committee would provide an opportunity to negotiate a multilateral framework for the prevention of an arms race in outer space in all its aspects.

Placing any weapon in outer space would have grave consequences for and an adverse impact on all States, whether or not they have the technological capacity to put such objects into orbit. Modern life depends on activities in outer space. Nearly 3,000 satellites are being used to provide vital services in a highly sophisticated information and communications network. The direct result of placing weapons in that environment would be the total collapse of related activity worldwide if those services were interrupted or disrupted. The legal instruments that seek to achieve the goal, including the Partial Test Ban Treaty of 1963, the Outer Space Treaty of 1967 and the Agreement Governing the Activities of States on the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies of 1979, have played a positive role in enhancing the peaceful use of outer space, including by promoting the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and other military activities in outer space.

The Group of Arab States believes that it is in the interest of the international community to proceed

with negotiations on an international legally binding instrument to prohibit the placing of any kind of weapon in outer space.

Ms. Djajaprawira (Indonesia): I am honoured to speak on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM).

NAM appreciates the common interests and rights of all States in the exploration and use of outer space for exclusively peaceful purposes and underscores that the prevention of an arms race in outer space, including a ban on the deployment of weapons therein, can avert a grave threat to international peace and security.

NAM remains concerned by the negative implications of the development and deployment of anti-ballistic-missile defence systems and the threat of weaponization and militarization of outer space. NAM further underlines the critical importance of strict compliance with existing arms limitation and disarmament agreements relevant to outer space, including bilateral agreements, and with the existing regime concerning the use of outer space.

NAM emphasizes the necessity of further measures with appropriate and effective provisions for verification to prevent an arms race in outer space and stresses the urgent need for the commencement of substantive work in the Conference on Disarmament on a universal legally binding instrument on the prevention of an arms race in outer space.

NAM notes that the abrogation of the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty brought about new challenges to strategic stability and the prevention of an arms race in outer space. NAM remains seriously concerned by the negative security consequences of the deployment of strategic missile defence systems, which could trigger an arms race and lead to a further development of advanced missile systems and an increase in the number of nuclear weapons.

NAM calls for a universal, comprehensive and non-discriminatory approach to the issue of missiles within the United Nations. Any initiative on the subject should take into account the security concerns of all States and their right to the peaceful uses of space technologies.

While noting some new initiatives on outer space, NAM underscores that any proposals or initiatives on outer space should be pursued within the competent United Nations bodies and that any possible decision thereon should be made by consensus.

NAM emphasizes that space science and technology and their applications, such as satellite communications, Earth observation systems and satellite navigation technologies, provide indispensable tools for viable, long-term solutions for sustainable development. They can contribute more effectively to efforts to promote the development of all countries and regions, to improve people's lives, to conserve natural resources and to enhance preparedness for and mitigation of the consequences of disasters. Thus, while underscoring the availability of space science and technology to all interested countries, NAM stresses that they should be utilized in accordance with international law and the principles and purpose of the Charter of the United Nations, in particular the promotion of international peace and security.

The Chair (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to the observer of the European Union.

Ms. Ganslandt (European Union): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its members. Turkey, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Iceland, Serbia, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Armenia and Georgia align themselves with this statement.

The EU and its member States have a long-standing position in favour of the preservation of a safe and secure space environment and peaceful uses of outer space on an equitable and mutually acceptable basis. Strengthening the safety, security and long-term sustainability of activities in outer space is in our common interest and is a key priority for the European Union. It contributes to the development and security of States. Preventing outer space from becoming an area of conflict is essential for strengthening strategic stability. To that end, we aim to promote international cooperation in the exploration and use of outer space for peaceful purposes.

Space assets, which are operated by an increasing number of governmental and non-governmental entities, offer the world enormous benefits that were unimaginable just a few decades ago. Today, those benefits are accompanied by significant challenges stemming from dangerous orbital debris and thus the potential of destructive collisions, from the crowding of satellites — *inter alia*, those in geostationary orbit — from the growing saturation of the radio-frequency spectrum and from the threat of deliberate disruption. All outer space activities can be affected

by those challenges. Those issues call for the serious involvement of current and future space-using and space-faring countries to ensure greater safety, security and sustainability in outer space.

The need for transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities has significantly increased. Existing instruments, such as The Hague Code of Conduct, show that transparency and confidence-building measures can improve security and mutual understanding between States.

Following the adoption of General Assembly resolutions 61/75 and 62/43 on transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities and in response to the request by the Secretary-General to Member States for concrete proposals on transparency and confidence-building measures, the EU introduced, in September 2007, a proposal for a voluntary space code of conduct aimed at promoting transparency and confidence-building measures. On 5 June 2012, at a multilateral meeting in Vienna, the European Union presented a draft for an international code of conduct for outer space activities. The EU subsequently held extensive bilateral and multilateral discussions concerning that draft, culminating in the first round of open-ended consultations, held in Kiev on 16 and 17 May 2013.

Following those consultations, the EU has presented a revised draft, dated 16 September 2013, which is proposed for further discussion at the next round of open-ended consultations, which is to take place from 20 to 22 November 2013 in Bangkok. That latest draft introduces changes based on the comments and suggestions we received during and after the consultations in Kiev. The EU calls on all interested States to continue to actively engage in this process towards an international code of conduct for outer space activities.

Along with its proposal for a space code of conduct, the EU supports the notion that voluntary rules of the road offer a pragmatic approach to achieving and strengthening adherence to norms of behaviour in space. The draft code seeks to achieve enhanced safety, security and sustainability in space by emphasizing that space activities should involve a high degree of transparency, with the aim of building confidence among space actors worldwide. As an over-arching political initiative, it provides an effective framework to fulfil those objectives. The ultimate goal of that process is to garner the broadest possible support for a

code of conduct, which should be adopted by an act of international endorsement, for example in the context of a diplomatic conference.

Since its initial presentation, the EU has actively sought to raise awareness on the initiative and has led the multilateral process. In that context, the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, supported by the EU, has organized a series of regional seminars in Kuala Lumpur, Addis Ababa, Mexico City and Astana, and further meetings are foreseen for the Middle East and South Asia.

We welcome the support of the Secretary-General stated in the report of the Group of Governmental Experts on Transparency and Confidence-Building Measures in Outer Space Activities (see A/68/189), which was undertaken pursuant to resolution 65/68. We express our gratitude to the Chair of the Group, Mr. Victor Vasiliev, for his efforts and leadership. We welcome the endorsement by the Group of Experts of efforts to pursue political commitments, including a multilateral code of conduct, and to encourage responsible actions and a peaceful use of outer space. We will continue to actively support the creation of transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities, inter alia, by continuing to promote and work towards the adoption of an international code of conduct for outer space activities.

Finally, we support draft resolution A/C.1/68/L.40, tabled jointly by China, Russia and the United States, which will be co-sponsored by all EU member States.

Mr. Aljowaily (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): My delegation aligns itself with the statements delivered earlier by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and by the representative of Bahrain on behalf of the Group of Arab States.

(*spoke in English*)

As space applications are essential to the modern lifestyle, Egypt firmly believes in the importance of maintaining outer space for exclusively peaceful purposes. Every effort should be exerted to avoid turning outer space into yet another field of conflict. Given the history of warfare and conflict, it is obvious that the only way to keep outer space as a peaceful zone is to guarantee that no weapons are ever deployed there and in that way to ensure the prevention of an arms race in outer space (PAROS).

Egypt's position on PAROS rests on the following benchmarks.

First, outer space is the common heritage of humankind. No space-faring country should try to restrict or curtail the full access of other countries to outer space or their use of it. As any threat to the peaceful use of outer space is a collective threat, the responsibility to keep peaceful uses of outer space accessible to all humanity is a shared responsibility that requires a multilateral framework.

Secondly, any unilateral declarations, bilateral agreements and/or like-minded groups' common positions should only contribute to confidence-building. They do not nullify the need for a multilateral legally binding agreement on the prevention of an arms race in outer space. Such an agreement should be concluded with the participation — and taking into consideration the interests — of all countries, with equal privileges and obligations; it should not be tailor-made for current users of outer space.

Thirdly, it is clear that a legal body governing PAROS is missing. While the work of the Group on Government Experts on Transparency and Confidence-Building Measures in Outer Space Activities is recognized, it is important to stress that transparency and confidence-building measures can only be a complement to a legally binding multilateral treaty or treaties prohibiting not only the placement of any kind of weapon in outer space or on celestial bodies, but also forbidding any earth- or space-based weapons that target satellites.

Fourthly, military applications in outer space — for example, communication and navigation applications — should not be used to legitimize or facilitate the weaponization of outer space. The real threat to the shared peaceful use of outer space comes from placing weapons in outer space and targeting satellites.

Finally, any treaty on PAROS should be universal, verifiable and equitable and should have the same obligations and benefits for all Member States that are parties to it. Numerous studies and proposals have shown that a verification regime related to PAROS can be constructed. Those studies answer the pretexts that some have made that the launching of negotiations on PAROS is unfeasible. They prove that what is lacking is the political will, and not the technical capability.

We continue to hold that the Conference on Disarmament is the place to negotiate a treaty on PAROS. The time has always been ripe to start negotiations there. We recognize the initiative undertaken by China and the Russian Federation to submit a document on elements of a treaty on the prevention of the placement of weapons in outer space and of the threat or use of force against outer space objects, which can serve as a base on which to commence negotiations and build on this pressing issue.

Every year, Egypt and Sri Lanka alternate in presenting a draft resolution on PAROS to the First Committee of the General Assembly. We fully endorse Sri Lanka's efforts this year. The draft resolution receives near unanimity every year, with only two countries abstaining. We call on all countries to continue their support and on the remaining two countries to join the overwhelming majority of the United Nations in voting for the draft resolution.

We note with interest the new proposals that were circulated informally regarding no first placement of weapons in outer space. We intend to examine them with great attention as part of the ongoing dialogue to further the objective of prevention of an arms race in outer space, spearheaded by the yearly First Committee draft resolution on PAROS, which, again, Egypt and Sri Lanka alternate in presenting.

Ms. Robles (France) (*spoke in French*): France fully endorses the statement made earlier on behalf of the European Union.

Space has become essential to modern life. It has innumerable peaceful applications, ranging from telecommunications to terrestrial, aerial and maritime navigation and to meteorology. Naturally, space is equally fundamental for international security.

True to our long-standing position, France remains attached to the preservation of peace and security in outer space and to the development of space activities for peaceful purposes. In this gathering, France has played an active part in the Group of Governmental Experts on Transparency and Confidence-Building Measures in Outer Space Activities, created by resolution 65/68, which concluded its work this summer. We welcome the quality of the work carried out by the experts under the chairmanship of Mr. Vasiliev of the Russian Federation.

France is anxious to avoid an arms race in outer space. However, a new legally binding instrument would advance security only if it were comprehensive,

precise, universal and credible. Furthermore, drawing up such an instrument would inevitably be a lengthy process, while the problems encountered every day in outer space activities call for pragmatic and prompt solutions, including measures to be applied immediately.

One of our priorities is to ensure that the space environment allows for the development of space activities for peaceful purposes for the benefit of all. However, the growth in the number of players and the rapid expansion and diversification of civilian and military activities in space pose risks to the security of objects placed there. One of the main challenges for space activities is the proliferation of debris from space objects. It is in our common interest as nations with a current and future space capacity to develop tools that enable us to meet those challenges and thus to ensure the safety and security of space activities.

On that point, France is playing an active part in the work on the long-term viability of space activities carried out in the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space. The problems we face are security problems in the broadest sense, requiring responses that cover civilian and military aspects. For that reason, in order to better ensure the security of space activities, France supports, in the various relevant entities and in countries that have developed or intend to develop space activities, the development of voluntary transparency and confidence-building measures that are acceptable to the greatest number of States.

As we have affirmed on several occasions, we are committed to the major basic principles that should, in our view, govern space activities. They are, first, freedom of access to space for peaceful purposes, secondly, the preservation of the security and integrity of space objects in orbit, and thirdly, respect for the right of States to legitimate self-defence.

We give our full support to the draft international code of conduct for outer space activities, which was the subject of substantive discussions in Kiev in May. The text that was submitted and that now has the support of a very large number of countries will apply to all space activities. It will be voluntary and open to the participation of all States. It will make it possible to define the key rules to be observed by States with military and civilian space capabilities. The draft code recalls the importance of taking steps to prevent outer space from becoming a conflict zone and calls on all States to resolve conflicts in space by peaceful means.

We believe that the ongoing work on the code of conduct to develop exchanges of information, confidence-building measures and good practices for space activities fully meets that objective since it will, in our opinion, enhance trust and understanding among space stakeholders, thereby effectively contributing to the long-term sustainability of outer space activities.

Promoting transparency in order to build confidence will help to prevent accidents and collisions of space objects. It will also help to prevent malicious acts from going unnoticed and incidents in outer space from being interpreted as hostile action. Consequently, it will enhance the security of space activities. That comprehensive initiative, covering both civilian and military aspects, cannot be addressed in established forums such as the Conference on Disarmament, which deals with military aspects of the issue, or the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, which deals with civilian aspects. While maintaining the highest degree of inclusivity, it seems necessary to continue discussions in the current ad hoc format. We hope that that approach will be productive and will result in the adoption by as many States as possible of a code that will then be presented to this gathering. We call on all interested States to take part in the consultations to be held in Bangkok in November.

Mr. Eberhardt (United States of America): We will soon observe the fiftieth anniversary of the adoption by the General Assembly of the Declaration of Legal Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space. Resolution 1962 (XVIII), which was adopted by consensus on 13 December 1963, laid out the key principle that outer space is free for exploration and use by all States on the basis of equality and in accordance with international law. Just over three years later, that component and other elements of the Declaration of Legal Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space formed the core for the key precepts of the 1967 Outer Space Treaty, which remains the foundation of the international legal framework for space activities.

In the half century since the Declaration was adopted, all nations and peoples have seen a radical transformation in how we live our daily lives, in many ways due to our use of space. Over the past three decades, the space environment, especially key Earth orbits, has become increasingly utilized as

more and more States are becoming space-faring and space-benefiting nations.

As a consequence, the outer space environment is becoming increasingly congested, contested and competitive. Threats to vital space services may potentially increase during the next decade as disruptive and destructive counterspace capabilities are developed. In the face of those challenges, it is essential that all nations work together to adopt approaches for responsible activity in space and to preserve the freedom of all nations to explore and use outer space for the benefit of current and future generations.

Given the importance of international cooperation, the United States welcomes the achievement of consensus in the Group of Governmental Experts on Transparency and Confidence-Building Measures in Outer Space Activities. Under the able chairmanship of Victor Vasiliev of Russia, the study conducted by the Group (see A/68/189) provides this body with a unique opportunity to advance consensus on the importance and priority of voluntary and pragmatic measures to ensure the sustainability and safety of the space environment and to strengthen stability and security in space for all nations.

The study recommends that States and international organizations consider and implement a range of measures to enhance the transparency of outer space activities, to further international cooperation, consultations and outreach, and to promote coordination to enhance safety and predictability in the uses of outer space. Reflecting the extensive technical expertise within the Group, the study provides an analytically rigorous set of criteria for evaluating proposed transparency and confidence-building measures. Those criteria can help inform future discussions in this Committee and in other forums regarding the implementation, demonstration and validation of specific measures.

The Group also endorsed efforts to pursue political commitments, including a multilateral code of conduct, to encourage responsible actions in and the peaceful use of outer space. In particular, the Group noted the efforts of the European Union (EU) to develop an international code of conduct for outer space activities through open-ended consultations with the international community. The United States continues to participate actively in this initiative and looks forward to the next round of open-ended consultations, to take place in November

in Bangkok. The United States joins the EU in calling on all interested States to continue to engage in that process.

The findings and recommendations of the Group of Governmental Experts deserve careful consideration by all States. Many of the Group's recommendations can serve as the basis for a range of political commitments, as well as for specific transparency and confidence-building measures that can be implemented on a voluntary basis through national mechanisms. Therefore, the United States looks forward to reviewing the status of States' efforts to implement those specific recommendations of the Group at future sessions of the Committee.

Although the specific actions of each State serve as the foundation for the pursuit of unilateral transparency and confidence-building measures, the Group's study also highlights the importance of international cooperation at the bilateral, regional and multilateral levels. As the study notes, international space cooperation should be based on the 1996 "Benefit" Declaration, adopted by the General Assembly in resolution 51/122, with each State free to determine the nature of its participation on an equitable and mutually acceptable basis with regard to appropriate technology safeguard arrangements, multilateral commitments and relevant standards and practices.

Bilateral transparency and confidence-building measures also include discussions on space security, such as those that the United States has been conducting with a number of space-faring nations around the globe. Along with United States efforts to develop mechanisms for the improved warning of potential hazards to spaceflight safety, those discussions constitute significant measures to clarify intent and to build confidence.

The United Nations itself can play an important role in fostering cooperation on space transparency and confidence-building measures among States. The United States looks forward to discussions next year in the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, the Disarmament Commission and the Conference on Disarmament on how the specific recommendations of the Group's study can be considered by each of those bodies within the scope of their respective mandates and programmes of work. The United States also looks forward to similar consideration of the relevant aspects of the Group's recommendations in other United Nations bodies and in regional and multilateral forums.

As the international community moves forward on space transparency and confidence-building measures, there will also need to be greater coordination among relevant United Nations entities to facilitate the implementation of transparency and confidence-building measures and to promote their further development. In that regard, the United States believes that all relevant entities and organizations of the United Nations system should coordinate, as appropriate, on matters related to the recommendations contained in the report of the Group of Governmental Experts transmitted by the Secretary-General. The endorsement by the Group's study of voluntary and non-legally binding transparency and confidence-building measures to strengthen stability in space is a landmark development.

The United States will continue to take a leadership role in international efforts that translate results from this consensus study into action. We are therefore pleased to join in co-sponsoring draft resolution A/C.1/68/L.40, on "Transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities", at this session of the General Assembly. We hope that draft resolution can be adopted by consensus.

All nations are increasingly reliant on space, not only when disasters strike, but also for our day-to-day life. We need to protect and preserve our long-term interests by considering the risks that could harm the space environment and disrupt the services on which the international community depends. For that reason, we must all work together and take action now to establish measures that will strengthen transparency and stability in outer space. That work towards transparency and confidence-building measures will enhance the long-term sustainability, stability, safety and security of the space environment. It is in the vital interests of the entire global community to protect the space environment for future generations.

Mr. Tilegen (Kazakhstan): The issue of outer space from the security and disarmament perspective is gaining increasing importance. The numbers of actors and stakeholders involved in outer space, with their diverse approaches, have made our space environment hazardous, and that calls for immediate and urgent attention from all of us.

The Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China have jointly drawn up the draft treaty on the prevention of the placement of weapons in outer space and of the threat or use of force against outer space objects, which Kazakhstan fully endorses. However,

political hurdles and the impasse in the Conference on Disarmament block our endeavours to see the realization of that treaty. While we all agree on the necessity of stipulating space security measures, we see different emphases on the non-binding transparency and confidence-building measures. Kazakhstan calls for a combination of both approaches: a strong, unequivocal treaty, and the transparency and confidence-building measures to reinforce it.

Kazakhstan, as a member of the Group of Governmental Experts on Transparency and Confidence-Building Measures in Outer Space Activities, along with other Member States, endorses the Group's report (see A/68/189) and will work towards implementing its recommendations, particularly in seeking more relevant and timely confidence-building strategies. Consideration will therefore have to be given to the technologies we have to date and to the specific mechanisms to be set up. Kazakhstan, a member of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space as well, helps to develop joint programmes, continue research, generate information on outer space issues and study legal problems arising from the exploration of outer space.

What is necessary is the establishment of norms for responsible behaviour in space and, at the same time, addressing some of the national security concerns of space-faring nations. The possibility of weaponizing our fragile environment should be avoided at all costs. Moreover, that weaponizing would benefit only a few. Such exclusiveness would create distrust and suspicion, as happened with nuclear weapons and their secret proliferation. Such a phenomenon could occur as more countries stealthily seek to acquire those deadly weapons. History must not repeat itself.

Past experience has also proved that a theatre of military action can be concealed, and that can become a major breach of international security. Presently, more than 130 countries possess sophisticated space programmes or are developing them, using information from space assets for their own defence. Action must be taken to ensure that such dangerous weapons systems do not undermine the existing structure of agreements on arms limitation, particularly in the nuclear-missile sphere.

Kazakhstan does not aim to develop space weapons or deploy them in outer space, now or in the future. On the other hand, my country, which hosts the first

and largest cosmodrome on its territory, the Baikonur, is actively developing a national civilian space programme, including the creation of a space rocket complex, Baiterek. That infrastructure will enable the country to become part of the world market of space services and have access to the latest technologies, in accordance with the standards of international collective security.

Kazakhstan acceded to the International Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation in 2005. It is currently working actively to join the Missile Technology Control Regime, strictly following the Regime's regulations on export policy. At the same time, we do believe that the principles of fairness and equality should prevail, without exception. Past experience has proven how very difficult it is to abolish accumulated nuclear, chemical and biological weapons of mass destruction and to eliminate space weapons and space debris in the future. So every proactive step should be taken right now.

Furthermore, weapons of mass destruction divert our limited global financial resources from sustainable development, which should be a key priority of ours.

Kazakhstan will join the multilateral action to ensure that space, which is also a global public good, remains free from nuclear weapons.

Mrs. Ledesma Hernández (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): Cuba recognizes the common interest of all humankind in space exploration for peaceful purposes and for the benefit of scientific and economic development. Accordingly, we reaffirm the right of all countries to the use and exploration of outer space for peaceful purposes.

Our country supports the prevention of an arms race in outer space and transparency and confidence-building measures in activities related to outer space. An arms race in outer space would pose serious dangers for international peace and security. Therefore we believe it is appropriate and necessary to continue developing international transparency and confidence-building measures for outer space. In that regard, we believe that the Conference on Disarmament must play the primary role in the negotiations on a multilateral agreement on the prevention of an arms race in outer space in all its aspects.

As an important contribution to efforts to prevent an arms race in outer space, we welcome the agreement

on concrete international measures such as prior notification, verification and follow-up, so as to achieve greater transparency in space activities.

Mr. AlAjmi (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, my delegation would like to endorse the statements delivered earlier by the representative of Bahrain on behalf of the Arab Group and by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

The science and technology related to outer space issues are key elements in efforts to strengthen development throughout the world. Their role is increasing with a view to improving the living conditions of humankind, preserving our natural resources, and predicting natural disasters and mitigating their impact. They contribute effectively to finding long-term solutions to sustainable development issues.

Outer space has become essential to modern life. Therefore, Kuwait realizes that the best way to explore outer space is through a multilateral approach, under the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, in the context of the maintenance of international peace and security. Those efforts do not govern the peaceful use of outer space only, but by ensuring universality they help us avoid unilateral approaches that would undoubtedly lead only to an arms race in outer space, which could have disastrous consequences and a damaging impact on development, as well as undermine trust.

With respect in particular to the gaps in the international outer space instruments, despite the existence of the 1963, 1967 and 1979 treaties, Kuwait reiterates that it is necessary to open serious negotiations for the establishment of a comprehensive, non-discriminatory, legally binding international instrument outlawing the placement of weapons in outer space. We support the establishment of a committee within the framework of the Conference on Disarmament to address that important issue as part of a comprehensive balanced programme of work.

Mr. Juneau (Canada) (*spoke in French*): Canada welcomes the various practical initiatives to increase transparency, contribute to confidence-building efforts and protect continued access to and use of outer space. In that regard, Canada takes note of the work of the Group of Governmental Experts and looks forward to the results of their efforts.

An international code of conduct for outer space activities could set out internationally accepted norms for responsible behaviour in outer space by all

spacefaring countries, including a promise to mitigate the creation of space debris that could hinder future space operations, and a commitment to ensuring openness and transparency among space agencies in order to avoid collisions between satellites and other space assets. The proposed code would ensure non-interference in the abilities of all countries to use outer space for peaceful purposes. The proposed code could constitute an important step towards the development of an internationally recognized road map for outer space activities. With a view to improving the draft text, my country will continue to work actively with others, including at the next open-ended consultations in Bangkok in November.

Mr. Galvão de Queiroz (Brazil): Brazil expresses its continuing concern over the possibility of an arms race taking place in outer space and believes that it is in the best interest of the international community to start negotiations on a legally binding instrument to prevent the deployment of any kind of weapon in such an environment.

While the Outer Space Treaty prohibits the deployment of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in outer space, the Treaty alone is not sufficient to fully regulate that issue, since it does not explicitly cover conventional weapons or new technological advances. The world we live in strongly depends on space-based resources providing services that are present in almost all State sectors and in people's day-to-day activities. The interruption in satellite services as a result of the use of weapons in outer space would cause major global collapse.

More than 30 years ago, the first special session devoted to disarmament first called on the Conference on Disarmament (CD) to consider the issue of preventing arms in outer space. Despite concrete exchanges between 1985 and 1994, it is regrettable that since then the lack of consensus has precluded the Conference's adequate consideration of this fundamental issue. We note, however, that this impasse has not prevented delegations from putting proposals on the table.

Brazil believes that the proposal of a draft treaty on the prevention of weapons in outer space and the threats or use of force against outer space objects, introduced in 2008 by Russia and China as a CD working document, makes a good contribution to discussions on a legally binding instrument to regulate the matter. Pending the adoption of a clear prohibition on the placement of weapons in outer space, Brazil believes that it is of the

utmost importance to preserve the principle of outer space being used and explored exclusively for peaceful purposes.

As anticipated by the Russian delegation and by my own delegation in the First Committee's general debate, we intend to present a joint draft resolution on no-first-placement of weapons in outer space at the sixty-ninth session, which we hope will command the widest possible support among Member States. We welcome the fact that the initiative already has other important sponsors, such as Indonesia and Sri Lanka, and we hope that others will join us as a show of their shared commitments to an outer space free of all weapons.

Brazil recognizes that transparency and confidence-building measures can foster mutual understanding, political dialogue and cooperation among States. Yet we also note that they cannot be a substitute for legally binding norms. Brazil took part with satisfaction in the work of the Group of Governmental Experts on Transparency and Confidence-Building Measures in Outer Space Activities, established in accordance with resolution 65/68. We welcome the final report adopted by consensus (see A/68/189). We highlight in particular two elements contained in the document in that regard.

First, the Group concluded that voluntary political measures can form the basis for the consideration of concepts and proposals for legally binding obligations. This is major element to be stressed, since the Group agreed to recognize, for the purpose of the study, that transparency and confidence-building measures would be considered as non-legally binding voluntary measures.

Secondly, the Group agreed on a substantive section of the report devoted to the issue of international cooperation. In that context, the experts recognized that international cooperation on scientific and technical projects between spacefaring and non-spacefaring nations can contribute to confidence-building in outer space. Among its recommendations, the Group suggested that bilateral, regional and multilateral capacity-building programmes on space science and

technology can contribute to developing space skills and knowledge among educators and scientists in developing countries throughout the world. The Group also recognized the importance of the adoption of open satellite data collection and dissemination policies for sustainable and economic development. It noted that the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, held in 2012 in Rio de Janeiro, recognized the important role that space science and technology play in promoting sustainable development.

Brazil has also been taking part in the discussions on a possible international code of conduct for outer space activities, sponsored by the European Union (EU). While we recognize the efforts undertaken by the EU, we continue to believe that that initiative would benefit from an effective multilateral approach and mandate. In Brazil's view, no voluntary measure can entirely reflect the complexities of space security, which would be better addressed in the framework of a legally binding instrument. Since we believe that a possible code should aim at addressing exclusively those questions relating to the peaceful use of outer space, we note with concern that the latest draft continues to contain a reference to self-defence, which, we believe, introduces serious difficulties. In our view, such a reference could be interpreted in a way that justifies the use of force in outer space. That is a scenario we cannot afford to contemplate, not even in theory.

As the Brazilian delegation mentioned in its statement in the general debate (see A/C.1/68/PV.5), while we welcome political commitments and voluntary arrangements, we understand that they cannot be a substitute for legally binding measures that impose firm and long-term obligations on States. Brazil hopes that the Conference on Disarmament will adopt a programme of work that includes a working group on the prevention of an arms race in outer space that will pave the way for the negotiation of a legally binding instrument preventing the placement of weapons in outer space. Brazil believes that few issues are as ripe or call for such immediate action as this one.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.