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Seventieth session

First Committee

2nd meeting

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Official Records

Chair: Mr. Van Oosterom (Netherlands)

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

the Committee will benefit tremendously from the collective wisdom of all members of the Bureau.

Introductory statements

The Chair: In accordance with our programme of work and timetable, the Committee will begin its general debate today on all disarmament and international security agenda items allocated to it, that is, items 88 through 105. Before we proceed, however, allow me to make a brief statement in my capacity as Chair of the First Committee for this session.

It is a great honour for me as the representative of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to serve as Chair. I assure the Committee that I will do all in my ability to conduct the work of the Committee as effectively as possible. Let me first express my great appreciation and admiration for my predecessor, Ambassador Courtenay Rattray of Jamaica, who did a wonderful job during the last session. He guided the work of the Committee at its sixty-ninth session in exemplary fashion, and I can only assure the Committee that I will do my utmost to follow the high standard set by him.

The last time an Ambassador of the Kingdom of the Netherlands chaired the First Committee was in 1963, at the General Assembly's eighteenth session. The Chair then was Mr. Schurmann. It is an honour for me to follow in his footsteps. I would also like to commend Mr. Kim Won-soo, High Representative for Disarmament Affairs and his team, as well as the very experienced secretariat of the First Committee. Lastly, let me express my appreciation to the members of the Bureau who have worked so competently with me to fulfil my duties as Chair. I have no doubt that

This year marks a significant milestone as we commemorate the seventieth anniversary of the United Nations. Since the founding of the Organization, the First Committee's work has been at the very centre of our collective efforts aimed at disarmament and international security. Our efforts cover a broad spectrum. The First Committee's role and importance are beyond doubt and are reflected by the increasing number of resolutions being introduced and the growing number of delegations taking the floor. Here we shape our plans for the future, though such efforts are not without challenges. However, it is the essence of multilateralism that, despite our differences, ensures that we keep searching for a common way forward, both in process and in substance. Only then will we be able to enhance international peace and security — our shared objective. Progress can be achieved only through political will and determination. I have no doubt that we are all aware of the responsibility we bear in that regard.

The sheer number of security- and disarmament-related issues we will discuss is reflected in our full agenda for the coming weeks. Yesterday, in our collective interest I asked for members' cooperation in keeping to time limits. In the words of Ambassador Schurmann, my Dutch predecessor and Chair of the First Committee at its eighteenth session, I count on the cooperation of all members of the Committee, particularly as regards punctuality, in ensuring that the Committee will be able to carry out its work within the time allowed. As announced yesterday, all delegations

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will find a small analogue gadget on the desk in front of them, which, in 1963, also served as a gentle reminder to keep track of time and to assist with personal time management. I hope that, with its United Nations colours, it will also serve as a small souvenir of the seventieth session. It is a gift from the Chair and is on all desks.

I look forward to helping to guide the work of the First Committee to a successful conclusion, and I assure the Committee that, to that end, I am fully committed to working with all States Members of the United Nations in an inclusive, transparent and efficient way. With the Committee's support and that of the Bureau and the Secretariat, I feel confident that we will have a constructive and fruitful session.

I now have the pleasure of inviting the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Kim Won-soo, to make a statement.

Mr. Kim (High Representative for Disarmament Affairs): First of all, I congratulate you, Ambassador Van Oosterom, on your election as Chair of the First Committee and also on your very innovative way of reminding us all to respect time limits. I think that we should emulate this in other Committees as well, and, I hope, in plenary in future.

I am very much honoured to address the Committee today, as it is the very first time in my new capacity as Acting High Representative for Disarmament Affairs. I have no doubt about Ambassador Van Oosterom's ability to successfully shepherd the work of the Committee. I also wish to assure the members of the Bureau and all delegations of the fullest cooperation of the Office for Disarmament Affairs (ODA).

As the Chair has said, this year we are celebrating seven decades of the existence of the United Nations and the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (resolution 70/1), which will guide all of us into 2030. The Agenda is the product of collective will, and I hope that the same solidarity can be reflected in the work of the Committee. I would like to address four key topics today.

Of course, the first is nuclear disarmament. The sustainable development of our planet is an existential issue for us all, yet we cannot forget the threat that nuclear weapons also pose to our very existence. The international community shares the noble goal of a world free of nuclear weapons, but the divisions on how

to achieve it are still very deep. That was evident at the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, held in May. It was on display at the Conference on Disarmament, and very likely we will hear it echoed in the Committee as well. I am concerned that the considerable progress that we have made since the end of the Cold War has stalled.

The agreement reached between the E3+3 and Iran is a truly historic one. I commend all parties involved for their tireless efforts. It shows that diplomacy can work. It also shows that nuclear-weapon States can be united on matters of international security. I hope that the same leadership can be shown on nuclear disarmament. There is deep frustration over the pace and scale of disarmament. Anxiety about the dangers posed by nuclear weapons is deeply and genuinely felt — the large number of States that support the humanitarian consequences movement is testament to that. The continued bilateral and plurilateral efforts of nuclear-weapon States are vital to nuclear disarmament. However, if we are to take the necessary collective measures to achieve a world free of nuclear weapons, we need to develop an inclusive process that can make a genuine contribution to that goal. We need a process that will allow different views to be heard.

As the Secretary-General has urged, it needs to be done here at the United Nations and common ground and a pathway forward must be found. The United Nations is the only truly global multilateral body. We have no time to waste. We all know that problems become much harder to manage without a process. It is time to roll up our sleeves. I hope the Committee will do its part and bring all parties to the table. Those eight States whose ratification is long overdue and required to bring the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) into force have a special responsibility to do so as quickly as possible. They should not wait for others to act.

At the same time, we cannot forget that there are still 25 other States that have yet to ratify the Treaty, and I call on them to do so expeditiously, because every new ratification strengthens the CTBT's norm and universality. The ODA, in close consultation with the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization, will do everything it can to help those States build the capacity they need to prepare the domestic ground for ratification.

Negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty are also long overdue. There is broad support for

an irreversible, verifiable, non-discriminatory and multilateral treaty. I hope that the report of the Group of Governmental Experts to make recommendations on possible aspects that could contribute to but not negotiate a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices (A/70/81) will help facilitate discussions in whatever way the Committee finds appropriate, formally or informally.

Secondly, I would like to discuss emerging security risks. In this rapidly evolving world we are becoming ever more dependent on technology. Emerging technologies bring many benefits, but they can also pose challenges to peace and security if we do not prepare to mitigate the risks. I am concerned that we have an institutional and normative vacuum and that the technology is more nimble than we are and is ahead of us. The gap between the technological reality and our ability to govern it is growing rather than getting smaller. We need to find a way to narrow the gap. This is a battle we must not lose. Our goal must be to ensure the strict application of international law to outer space, to the use of unmanned aerial vehicles, to the development of increasingly autonomous lethal weapons and especially to cyberspace.

In outer space, the growing number of actors and technical capabilities is resulting in an increasingly complex environment. At the same time, the significance of outer space for many countries' strategic doctrines is growing. Greater international cooperation and action are needed to ensure that outer space remains a conflict-free zone and that it can continue to be explored and used to benefit all countries.

The Internet is hard-wired into our daily lives, more and more of which are spent online. But along with its many benefits, the Internet age has also exposed vulnerabilities. As the Secretary-General has said, a future catastrophe involving financial or health systems, key urban infrastructure or deadly weaponry is not hard to imagine. Moreover, the pervasive nature of information technology leaves it vulnerable to exploitation, including by violent extremists and terrorists who use the Internet to incite, recruit and train, and to plan attacks. Such non-State actors must not be allowed to use the Internet to evade accountability. For the past 10 years, through its Group of Governmental Experts, the First Committee has been exploring how to address the issue of cybergovernance. However, it is clear that technology is outpacing us. I urge the

Committee to improve its work on creating rules of the road establishing global cyber norms, rules and principles. The issue affects our security, societies and economic development.

Thirdly, I would like to update the Committee on chemical weapons and Syria. The Security Council's adoption of its resolution 2235 (2015) was a positive outcome in the midst of the dark conflict in Syria. The independent Joint Investigative Mechanism of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and the United Nations that it created has a mandate to identify as far as is possible the perpetrators, organizers and sponsors — and those otherwise involved — of the use of chemical weapons and toxic chemicals used as weapons in Syria. I welcome the solidarity the Security Council has shown on the issue. However, the new Mechanism has a daunting task ahead of it. I would like to assure the Committee that the United Nations stands ready to provide whatever assistance it can. I trust that all the parties in the Syrian Arab Republic engaged in the conflict, and all Member States, will demonstrate the same support. As horrific as chemical weapons are, we cannot forget that more than 200,000 Syrians have been killed by conventional weapons, including heavy weapons used in populated areas. There is no military solution in Syria; the crisis there can be resolved only through a political settlement.

The fourth issue I would like to discuss is the need for sustained resourcing of the international legal architecture for disarmament. One of the clear highlights of the past year was the entry into force of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT). The ATT can be a major check on the illicit arms trade that flows from diversion, theft and unauthorized transfers. Its entry into force demonstrates that when the international community is united it can produce results. However, that is only the first step. Only when the Treaty is completely and universally implemented can its full potential be realized. I call on the more than 40 States that have supported or signed the ATT, but have not ratified it, to do so expeditiously. The Secretary-General and the United Nations are willing to help in any way they can, in close cooperation with the ATT secretariat, which has just been set up by the States parties. Similarly, I urge all States parties to help to contribute the necessary capacity-building assistance to enable the Treaty to reach its full potential.

The ATT is one example of situations where entry into force is only the beginning. States' responsibilities

do not end once a treaty is negotiated and adopted. Disarmament treaties and institutions require sustained interest and resources. I ask forgiveness if I am too blunt here, but through this Committee I have an obligation to remind Member States and States parties of their obligations, including financial obligations, under the treaties to which they are party. Any costs that are outstanding are effectively met or observed by the Secretariat and all of its Member States collectively, potentially affecting the efficiency of implementation support units and secretarial functions for those treaties. For example, as of May, States parties to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention owed around \$200,000; States parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions owed the Secretariat more than \$200,000, again, for servicing conferences; States parties to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons owed close to \$500,000; and States parties to the Biological Weapons Convention owed around \$600,000. Those are only a few examples.

The story is the same for the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR). I personally know how much the Committee cares about UNIDIR and its independence and ability to work effectively to help Member States deal with disarmament issues in its unique function as a mid- or secondary-level provider of assistance to States in addressing sensitive issues. But UNIDIR is suffering from a very serious financial crisis, and it needs the First Committee's support. Although the Director of UNIDIR will engage with the First Committee on a plan whereby we can strengthen its financial footing, I would also like to remind the Committee today that UNIDIR needs its full support, so that when the Fifth Committee meets it can consider how the regular budget support to UNIDIR can be beefed up. Today, that support is at almost the same level as it was 20 years ago, which means that during that time its regular budget support has not increased at all. In an era of budget constraints faced by almost all Governments, unless we can find a way to strengthen the regular budget support for financing key overhead costs, no donor will be willing to provide UNIDIR with a voluntary project contribution. It therefore needs the Committee's sustained interest in its financial situation.

The First Committee has a lot of work ahead of it. I encourage everyone to exercise maximum flexibility in the effort to achieve consensus on many crucial issues, including the procedural issues related to the organization of panel discussions. I hope it will adopt

its resolutions in a spirit of collective purpose and practical will. I wish the entire Committee the best of luck in its deliberations and look forward to continued engagement with everyone here in the coming months.

The Chair: I thank the High Representative for his statement.

Before opening the floor for statements, I would like to remind delegations of the time limit of 10 minutes when speaking in a national capacity and 15 minutes for those speaking on behalf of several delegations. To assist speakers in that regard, and with members' understanding, we will use a timing mechanism by which the red ring around the speaker's microphone will begin to blink when they reach the time limit. As necessary, I will respectfully remind speakers to conclude their statements in our collective interest.

As was mentioned at yesterday's organizational meeting, I encourage representatives who have longer statements to deliver a condensed version and provide their full statement to be posted on the First Committee web portal QuickFirst. I also encourage speakers to speak at a reasonable speed to allow for adequate interpretation.

I would also like to remind delegations that the rolling list of speakers for the general debate will be closed tomorrow, Friday, 9 October, at 6 p.m. All delegations intending to take the floor during the general debate that have not yet inscribed their names on the list are therefore encouraged to do so before that deadline.

I would like to take this opportunity to urge delegations to submit the names of their members to the Secretariat as soon as possible for inclusion on the official list of participants, which should be issued shortly. The deadline for submitting that information is Wednesday, 14 October, at 6 p.m. The names of participants submitted after that deadline will be included in an addendum to be issued after the conclusion of the Committee's work.

Delegations are also reminded that the Department of Public Information will issue press releases with daily coverage of our proceedings that will be posted on the United Nations website a few hours after each meeting.

Agenda items 88 to 105

General debate on all disarmament and related international security agenda items

Mr. Fachir (Indonesia): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the States members of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). I would like to congratulate you, Sir, and the other Bureau members on your election and to assure you of the Non-Aligned Movement's full cooperation.

NAM reiterates its positions on the entire range of disarmament and international security issues as contained in the final document of its seventeenth Ministerial Conference, held in Algiers in May 2014. In that context, I would like to highlight the Movement's views on some important issues.

The Movement reaffirms its principled positions on nuclear disarmament, which is its highest priority, and remains extremely concerned about the threat to humankind posed by the continued existence of nuclear weapons and their possible use or threat of use. The nuclear-disarmament situation continues to be characterized by impasse. The nuclear-weapon States have made no progress in eliminating their weapons, and the role of nuclear weapons in their security policies has not diminished. Some are modernizing their nuclear arsenals and planning research on new nuclear warheads, or have announced their intention to develop new delivery vehicles for nuclear weapons. The Movement is deeply concerned about this dismal state of affairs.

The international community has waited too long to see the goal of the total elimination of nuclear weapons realized. It has become obvious that the existing approach of the nuclear-weapon States, the so-called step-by-step approach, has failed to make any concrete or systematic progress towards total elimination. We cannot allow forward movement on nuclear disarmament to be held hostage to progress on non-proliferation or perceived notions of strategic stability. It is time to take a new and comprehensive approach.

The Movement underscores the importance of resolution 69/58, entitled "Follow-up to the 2013 high-level meeting of the General Assembly on nuclear disarmament", which outlines a concrete pathway for realizing nuclear disarmament. In that context, the Movement is confident that full implementation of the resolution, particularly through the start of negotiations

in the Conference on Disarmament aimed at concluding a comprehensive convention on nuclear weapons, can ensure tangible progress on nuclear disarmament. Here, NAM would like to recall the General Assembly's decision to convene a United Nations high-level conference no later than 2018 in order to review progress made in that regard, and we emphasize the need for early and appropriate preparation to ensure a successful conference. The Movement welcomed the second General Assembly plenary meeting celebrating 26 September as the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons, devoted to furthering that objective.

NAM reiterates its deep concern about the enormous threat to peace posed by the continued existence of nuclear weapons, as well as the military doctrines of the nuclear-weapon States and NATO, which establish rationales for the use or threat of use of such weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States. Such doctrines cannot be justified on any grounds. NAM once again reiterates its call to nuclear-weapon States to fully comply with their legal obligations and unequivocal commitment to eliminating their nuclear weapons without further delay, in a transparent, irreversible and internationally verifiable manner. We also call on nuclear-weapon States to immediately drop any plans to continue to modernize, upgrade, refurbish, or extend the lives of their nuclear weapons and related facilities.

NAM reaffirms our urgent need, as a matter of high priority, to conclude a universal, unconditional, non-discriminatory and legally binding instrument aimed at effectively protecting non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons under any circumstances, pending the total elimination of nuclear weapons, which remains the only absolute guarantee against their use or threat of use. We are concerned about the fact that despite non-nuclear-weapon States' long-standing requests for such legally binding assurances, no tangible progress has been achieved.

NAM would like to affirm the importance of humanitarian considerations in the context of all deliberations on nuclear weapons and the promotion of the goal of nuclear disarmament. In that connection, we welcome the growing focus on the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons, including at the three conferences in Oslo, Nayarit and Vienna. The broad participation in those conferences shows that the catastrophic humanitarian

consequences of nuclear weapons are a fundamental and global concern.

The Movement is deeply concerned about the immediate, indiscriminate and massive death and destruction that can be caused by the detonation of any nuclear weapon, along with their long-term catastrophic consequences for human health, the environment and other vital economic resources, which thus endanger the lives of present and future generations. In this context, we reaffirm the need for all States at all times to comply with applicable international law, including international humanitarian law. Any use of nuclear weapons is a violation of the United Nations Charter and a crime against humanity.

NAM also reaffirms that the total elimination of nuclear weapons and the assurance that they will never be produced again are the only absolute guarantee against the catastrophic humanitarian consequences arising from their use. Furthermore, NAM calls upon the nuclear-weapon States to reduce immediately the operational status of nuclear weapons, including through complete de-targeting and de-alerting, in order to avoid the risks of unintentional and accidental use of such weapons.

The Movement reaffirms its principled positions on non-proliferation of nuclear weapons in all its aspects. NAM believes that nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation are mutually reinforcing and are essential for strengthening international peace and security. Non-proliferation derives its legitimacy from the larger objective of nuclear disarmament. Pursuing non-proliferation alone while ignoring nuclear disarmament obligations is both counterproductive and unsustainable. NAM emphasizes that proliferation concerns are best addressed through multilaterally negotiated, universal, comprehensive and non-discriminatory agreements.

NAM States parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) welcome the accession of the State of Palestine to the Treaty as its 191st State party. NAM States parties to the NPT regret the failure of the ninth NPT Review Conference to reach consensus on a final outcome document, despite the efforts made by NAM delegations. This failure should serve as a stimulus to work harder towards achieving nuclear disarmament, the ultimate objective of the NPT.

Recalling the opposition expressed by the United States, the United Kingdom and Canada at the concluding session of the 2015 NPT Review Conference, NAM States parties to the NPT express their disappointment that, as the result of such opposition, consensus on new measures regarding the process to establish a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction was not achieved. This could undermine efforts towards strengthening the NPT regime as a whole. NAM re-emphasizes the special responsibility of the sponsor States of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East in implementation of that resolution. NAM is concerned that the persistent lack of implementation of the 1995 resolution, contrary to the decisions made at the relevant NPT Review Conferences, undermines the effectiveness and credibility of the NPT and disrupts the delicate balance between its three pillars, taking into account that the indefinite extension of the Treaty agreed at the 1995 Review Conference is inextricably linked to the implementation of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East does not entail the right to indefinitely possess nuclear weapons.

NAM is of the firm belief that non-proliferation policies should not undermine the inalienable right of States to acquire, have access to, import or export nuclear material, equipment and technology for peaceful purposes. NAM reaffirms the inalienable right of each State to develop research, produce and use nuclear energy, including the sovereign right to develop full national nuclear fuel cycles for peaceful purposes without discrimination. The Movement once again reaffirms the sovereign right of each State to define its national energy policies. NAM stresses that any decision on multilateral approaches to the nuclear fuel cycle shall be made by consensus and without prejudice to the inalienable right of each State to develop a full national nuclear fuel cycle.

NAM welcomes the successful conclusion of nuclear negotiations between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the E3+3, resulting in the finalization of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action on 14 July 2015. NAM underlines that this agreement showed once again that dialogue and diplomacy are the most appropriate means to resolve such issues, as the Movement has always advocated.

NAM strongly rejects and calls for the immediate removal of any limitations and restrictions on exports to developing countries of nuclear material, equipment and technology for peaceful purposes, consistent with

the provisions of the relevant multilateral treaties. In this regard, NAM stresses that the technical cooperation and assistance provided by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in meeting the needs of its member States for material, equipment and technology for peaceful uses of nuclear energy shall not be subject to any conditions incompatible with its statute.

NAM once again reaffirms the inviolability of peaceful nuclear activities and that any attack or threat of attack against peaceful nuclear facilities — operational or under construction — poses a great danger to human beings and the environment, and constitutes a grave violation of principles of the United Nations Charter, international law and the resolutions of the IAEA General Conference.

NAM recognizes that the primary responsibility for nuclear safety rests with individual States. The Movement further recognizes that the responsibility for nuclear security within a State rests entirely with that State. Any multilateral norms, guidelines or rules in nuclear security should be pursued within the framework of the IAEA. The Movement emphasizes that measures and initiatives aimed at strengthening nuclear safety and nuclear security must not be used as a pretext or leverage to violate, deny or restrict the inalienable right of developing countries to develop research, production and use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes without discrimination.

NAM believes that the establishment of the nuclear-weapon-free zones created by the Treaties of Tlatelolco, Rarotonga, Bangkok and Pelindaba and the Treaty on a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Central Asia, as well as Mongolia's nuclear-weapon-free status, are positive steps and important measures towards strengthening global nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation. They reiterate that, in the context of nuclear-weapon-free zones, it is essential that nuclear-weapon States provide unconditional assurances against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons to all States of the Zone. NAM calls upon all nuclear-weapon States to ratify related protocols to all treaties establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones, withdraw any reservations or interpretative declarations incompatible with their object and purpose, and respect the denuclearization status of these zones.

NAM strongly supports the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East. Pending its

establishment, NAM demands that Israel, the only State in the region that has not joined the NPT or declared its intention to do so, renounce any possession of nuclear weapons, accede to the NPT without precondition or further delay, and promptly place all its nuclear facilities under IAEA full-scope safeguards. The Movement expresses great concern over the acquisition of nuclear capability by Israel, which poses a serious and continuing threat to the security of neighbouring and other States, and condemns Israel for continuing to develop and stockpile nuclear arsenals. The Movement also calls for the total and complete prohibition of the transfer of all nuclear-related equipment, information, material and facilities, resources or devices and extension of assistance in the nuclear-related scientific or technological fields to Israel.

NAM State parties to the NPT reiterate their serious concern over the two decades of delay in the implementation of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East, and urge the sponsors of the resolution to take all necessary measures to fully implement it without any further delay.

NAM State parties to the NPT reiterate their profound disappointment that the 2010 action plan on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction has not been implemented. They strongly reject the alleged impediments to implementing the 2010 action plan on the Middle East and the 1995 resolution on the Middle East. This runs contrary to the letter and spirit of the 1995 resolution, which constitutes the original terms of reference for establishing this zone. It also violates the collective agreement reached at the 2010 NPT Review Conference.

NAM also stresses the significance of achieving universal adherence to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), including on the part of all nuclear-weapon States, which, *inter alia*, should contribute to the process of nuclear disarmament. The Movement reiterates that if the objectives of the Treaty are to be fully realized, the continued commitment of all States signatories, especially the nuclear-weapon States, to nuclear disarmament will be essential. In that context, NAM welcomes the recent ratification of the CTBT by Angola.

NAM States parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction

(CWC) note with satisfaction the effective operation of the CWC as the only comprehensive multilateral treaty banning an entire category of weapons of mass destruction, providing for a verification system and promoting the use of chemicals for peaceful purposes. They call upon all concerned possessor State parties to ensure the complete destruction of their remaining chemical weapons within the final extended deadline. They call for the promotion of international cooperation in the field of chemical activities for purposes not prohibited under the Convention without any discrimination or restriction. In this regard, they attach high importance to the adoption of a plan of action on article XI on economic and technological development for the full, effective and non-discriminatory implementation of all provisions of article XI.

NAM State parties to the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) consider that the Convention represents an important component of the international legal architecture related to weapons of mass destruction. They recognize that the lack of a verification system continues to pose a challenge to the effectiveness of the Convention. They call for the resumption of the multilateral negotiations to conclude a non-discriminatory, legally binding protocol dealing with all articles of the Convention in a balanced and comprehensive manner, so as to sustainably strengthen the Convention, including through verification measures. They urge the party rejecting negotiations to reconsider its policy. They further emphasize the need for enhancing, without restrictions, international cooperation and assistance and exchanges in toxins, biological agents equipment and technology for peaceful purposes without any discrimination, in conformity with the Convention. NAM States parties to the BWC look forward to a successful review conference of the BWC, which is to be held in 2016.

In the context of resolutions 1540 (2004), 1673 (2006), 1810 (2008) and 1977 (2011), adopted by the Security Council in the areas covered by multilateral treaties on weapons of mass destruction, NAM underlines the need to ensure that any action of the Security Council does not undermine the Charter of the United Nations, existing multilateral treaties on weapons of mass destruction and international organizations established in this regard, or the role of the General Assembly. NAM cautions against the continuing practice of the Security Council of utilizing its authority to define the legislative requirements for

Member States in implementing its decisions. In this regard, NAM stresses that the issue of the acquisition of weapons of mass destruction by non-State actors should be addressed in an inclusive manner by the General Assembly, taking into account the views of all Member States.

NAM continues to affirm the sovereign right of States to acquire, manufacture, export, import and retain conventional arms and their parts and components for their self-defence and security needs. NAM expresses its concern about unilateral coercive measures, and emphasizes that no undue restriction should be placed on the transfer of such arms.

NAM remains deeply concerned over a wide range of security, humanitarian and socioeconomic consequences arising from the illicit manufacture, transfer and circulation of small arms and light weapons. NAM calls on all States, in particular major producing States, to ensure that the supply of small arms and light weapons is limited only to Governments or to entities duly authorized by them. NAM also underlines the need for the balanced, full and effective implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and the International Tracing Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons and, in this regard, stresses the key importance of international cooperation and assistance.

NAM stresses the importance of the reduction of military expenditures by major arms-producing countries, in accordance with the principle of undiminished security at the lowest level of armaments, and urges those countries to devote these resources to global economic and social development, in particular in the fight against poverty. In the context of the thematic debate, NAM will further elaborate on other issues related to conventional weapons.

NAM remains concerned over developments related to the antiballistic missile systems and the threat of weaponization and militarization of outer space, and reiterates its call for the commencement of negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament (CD) on a universal legally binding instrument on the prevention of an arms race in outer space, which remains a priority. In this regard, NAM reaffirms that the exploration and use of outer space should be for peaceful purposes only and

for the benefit of all States, irrespective of the degree of their social, economic or scientific development.

NAM reaffirms its position that the elaboration of any code of conduct for outer space activities should be consistent with the respective mandate of all relevant United Nations bodies, and should be held in the format of inclusive, transparent and consensus-based multilateral negotiations within the framework of the United Nations, based on a proper and unequivocal mandate, without specific deadlines and taking into account the interests of all States, irrespective of their level of development, in order to reach a balanced outcome that addresses the needs and reflects the concerns of all participants.

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

As the use of information and communications technologies has the potential to endanger international peace and security, countering such emerging security challenges and reducing their risk are essential. The development of a legal framework to address these issues should be pursued within the United Nations with the active and equal participation of all States.

The Movement notes with concern cases of the illegal use of new information and communications technologies, including social networks, to the detriment of States members of the Movement, and expresses its strongest rejection of those violations. The Movement stresses the importance of ensuring that the use of such technologies is fully in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, international law and, especially, the principles of sovereignty, non-interference in internal affairs and internationally recognized rules of peaceful coexistence among States.

NAM calls for transparency and strict application of the principle of equitable geographical representation, including in the composition of the Groups of Governmental Experts established in the field of disarmament and international security. The Movement also underlines the importance of transparency and openness of the work of such groups.

Expressing its deep concern on the continued lack of adequate representation of NAM countries in the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs, the Movement requests the Secretary-General and the High Representative to undertake steps to ensure balanced and equitable representation in the Office.

NAM is of the view that lethal autonomous weapon systems raise a number of ethical, legal, moral, technical and international peace and security-related questions that should be thoroughly deliberated and examined in the context of conformity to international law, including international humanitarian law and international human rights law. In this regard, NAM States parties to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) welcome the informal meeting of CCW experts on lethal autonomous weapon systems held in Geneva from 13 to 17 April, and support continued deliberations on this issue on the basis of an agreed mandate. NAM States parties to the CCW welcome the accession of Algeria and Palestine to the Convention and its annexed protocols.

NAM remains concerned by the continuous erosion of multilateralism in the field of disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control. The Movement is determined to continue promoting multilateralism as the core principle of negotiations in these areas and as the only sustainable approach to address these issues, in accordance with the United Nations Charter.

NAM reaffirms the importance of the CD as the sole multilateral negotiating body on disarmament, and reiterates its call on the CD to agree by consensus on a balanced and comprehensive programme of work without any further delay, taking into account the security interests of all States. In this regard, the Movement reaffirms the importance of the principle contained in the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament that:

“The adoption of disarmament measures should take place in such an equitable and balanced manner as to ensure the right of each State to security and to ensure that no individual State or group of States may obtain advantages over others at any stage.” (*A/S-10/2, para. 29*)

To instil a fresh impetus to global nuclear-disarmament efforts, NAM calls for the urgent commencement of negotiations in the CD for the early conclusion of a comprehensive convention on nuclear

weapons that prohibits their possession, development, production, acquisition, testing, stockpiling, transfer, use or threat of use, and provides for their destruction, as called for in resolution 69/58, submitted by the Movement. NAM supports the working paper submitted by Indonesia on behalf of the member States of the Group of 21 on the item “Follow-up to the 2013 high-level meeting of the General Assembly on nuclear disarmament”, contained in document CD/2032.

Enhancing the effectiveness of United Nations disarmament machinery is a shared objective. Based on its existing rules of procedure and methods of work, this machinery has produced landmark treaties and guidelines. NAM believes that the main difficulty lies in the lack of political will of some States to achieve progress, particularly on nuclear disarmament.

While welcoming the efforts made during the 2015 session of the CD on its programme of work, pursuant to decision CD/2022 to re-establish an informal working group of the CD, NAM notes the deliberations of the informal working group in its meetings during the 2015 session of the CD. NAM also takes note of the structured informal discussions held during the 2015 session of the CD on its agenda items, in accordance with the schedule of activities contained in document CD/2021. The Movement encourages all States to demonstrate the necessary political will so that the CD will fulfil its negotiating mandate.

For its part, NAM stands ready to engage constructively on the advancement of the issues on the United Nations disarmament agenda and the ways and means of strengthening the disarmament machinery. NAM reaffirms that a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament remains the most appropriate forum for furthering the priorities established by the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. The Movement underlines that the exercise of political will by all States is necessary to achieve concrete results. It is confident that with political courage and working together cooperatively, the First Committee can contribute tangibly to building a more secure world.

The Chair: Before giving the floor to the next speaker, I wish to remind delegations to kindly limit their interventions to 10 minutes while speaking in their national capacity and 15 minutes while speaking on behalf of groups.

Mr. Tin (Myanmar): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the 10 States members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), namely, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, the Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Viet Nam and my own country, Myanmar.

ASEAN congratulates you, Sir, on your election as Chair of the First Committee. We assure you of our full support and cooperation. ASEAN also congratulates Mr. Kim Won-soo on his assumption of the post of Acting High Representative for Disarmament Affairs. ASEAN also pays tribute to Ms. Angela Kane for her dedication to disarmament affairs during her tenure as High Representative.

ASEAN associates itself with the statement delivered by the Vice-Minister of the Republic of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

We are gathered here at a time when the United Nations is celebrating its seventieth anniversary, affording us the opportunity to renew our commitment to upholding the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. Our meeting follows the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (resolution 70/1). This year also marks an important milestone in South-East Asia’s integration process. The 10 member States will establish the ASEAN Community by the end of 2015, which will contribute positively to the maintenance of regional peace and security.

Peace and security are essential requisites for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Strengthening our collective efforts to shape a secure future has become even more important. Although the United Nations has contributed considerably to maintaining world peace and security, the number of regional conflicts and heinous acts of violence perpetuated by terrorists and extremist groups is on the rise. Their inhuman actions represent a threat to international peace and security. It is more crucial now than ever to ensure that the extremist groups and terrorists do not gain access to nuclear weapons, their means of delivery and materials and technologies related to their manufacture.

ASEAN reiterates that nuclear disarmament has always been, and remains, our utmost priority. Forty-five years into our collective efforts towards realizing this goal, the global stockpile of nuclear weapons remains alarmingly high. We therefore welcome recent

efforts of the States Members of the United Nations to focus the spotlight once again on nuclear disarmament.

ASEAN shares the aspiration of a world free of nuclear weapons. In this regard, ASEAN welcomes the General Assembly meeting held on 30 September to commemorate the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons. The meeting raised awareness on why it is crucial and urgent to start eliminating nuclear weapons.

We deeply regret that prospects for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons remain bleak, with almost two decades of stalemate in the Conference on Disarmament (CD). We call upon the CD to establish, as soon as possible and as the highest priority, an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament.

ASEAN reaffirms its commitments to the principles and objectives of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), which remains relevant, despite the failure of the 2015 Review Conference to adopt an outcome document. Although no agreement was possible this year and the preliminary discussions on the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons fell short of our collective ambitions on the issue, there remain valid conclusions and recommendations for other follow-up actions from the final document of the 2010 NPT Review Conference. These include the 22-point action plan on nuclear disarmament, which remains outstanding and which still requires full and effective implementation.

ASEAN supports substantive discussions on the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons, which are intended to provide a comprehensive understanding of the catastrophic effects of nuclear weapons on both human beings and the environment.

We agree with the Secretary-General that there is growing interest in understanding the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons. In that regard, we welcome the successful convening of the Conferences on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons, which were held in Oslo, Nayarit and Vienna, and we welcome the endorsement by 119 States of the Humanitarian Pledge. We also welcome the ninth Regional Roundtable on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons and the Prospects for a Ban Treaty, held in Bangkok in March 2015. It is high time to initiate a serious discussion to address the gaps that exist in the legal regime governing nuclear weapons. While we collectively deliberate the

next steps forward on this issue in a transparent and inclusive manner, we urge all States parties to uphold the NPT.

ASEAN continues to believe that the nuclear-weapon-free zones created by the Treaties of Tlatelolco, Rarotonga, Bangkok, Pelindaba and the Central Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone, as well as Mongolia's nuclear-weapon-free status, contribute significantly to strengthening the global nuclear-disarmament and non-proliferation regimes. We welcome the convening of the third Conference of States Parties and Signatories to Treaties that Establish Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones and Mongolia in New York on 24 April, chaired by Indonesia. While nuclear-weapon-free zones play an important role in nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, they should not be a substitute for the total and complete elimination of nuclear weapons.

ASEAN underscores the importance of the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones where they do not exist, especially in the Middle East, and expresses our continued support for the convening of the Conference, at the earliest date, on the establishment of such a zone in the Middle East. We also stress that it is necessary for the nuclear-weapon States to provide unconditional assurances against the use or the threat of use of nuclear weapons to all States in the zones.

ASEAN plays a pivotal role in maintaining and promoting peace and stability in the region, thereby contributing to international peace and security. We stress the importance of strengthening the nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament regime to maintain peace, security and prosperity in the region. We reaffirm our commitment to preserving South-East Asia as a zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction, as enshrined in the ASEAN Charter. We further reaffirm our commitment to upholding the Treaty on the Southeast Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone.

We underline the importance of the full and effective implementation of the Treaty, including through the Plan of Action to Strengthen the Implementation of the Treaty on the Southeast Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone (2013-2017), which was adopted by the ASEAN Foreign Ministers on 30 June 2013. In this regard, ASEAN hopes to intensify the ongoing efforts of the State parties to the Southeast Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty and the nuclear-weapon States to resolve all outstanding issues in accordance with the objectives

and principles of the Treaty pertaining to the signing and ratification of the Protocol to that Treaty.

ASEAN believes that the peaceful uses of nuclear technology provide enormous benefits for socioeconomic development and will significantly contribute to the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals. ASEAN reaffirms the inalienable right of every State to the peaceful use of nuclear technology, in particular for its economic and social development. On our part, ASEAN has enhanced our cooperation to ensure that high standards of safeguards and safety measures are adhered to in the peaceful use of nuclear energy. In this connection, the ASEAN Network of Regulatory Bodies on Atomic Energy was established in 2013. Since then, the Network has been a platform for sharing best practices and the exchange of views on safety, security and safeguards in the use of nuclear energy among the nuclear regulatory bodies or relevant authorities in the region.

ASEAN also recognizes the central role of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in nuclear non-proliferation and the promotion of peaceful uses of nuclear technology, nuclear safety and safeguards. We continue to explore ways to formalize relations between ASEAN and the IAEA.

ASEAN welcomes the conclusion of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the E3+3 in Vienna on 14 July, as well as the adoption of Security Council resolution 2231 (2015), endorsing the the Plan of Action, on 20 July. ASEAN believes that the Agreement will contribute to a peaceful resolution of Iran's nuclear issue, and in turn to peace, security and stability in the region and beyond. In this regard, we call on all parties to fulfil their obligations towards the full implementation of the agreement and encourage all Member States to contribute positively towards this objective.

ASEAN member States reiterate the importance of maintaining peace, stability and security in the Korean peninsula. We reaffirm our support for all efforts to achieve denuclearization of the Korean peninsula in a peaceful manner, including creating a conducive environment for the early resumption of the Six-Party Talks and to continue the inter-Korean dialogue, which would pave the way for the complete and verifiable denuclearization of the Korean peninsula in a peaceful manner, as well as for Korean reunification.

ASEAN calls for the early entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and attaches great importance to the universalization of the Treaty. The entry into force of the CTBT is essential to strengthening the nuclear non-proliferation regime. It is our shared obligation as members of the international community to reach this objective.

ASEAN shares the desire to strengthen the safety, security and long-term sustainability of outer space activities, as well as to ensure that outer space is used for peaceful purposes and for the benefit of all States, irrespective of the degree of their social, economic or scientific development. The convening of the ASEAN Regional Forum Workshop on Space Security in 2012 and 2014 contributed to the promotion of dialogue and understanding on outer space issues.

ASEAN supports the implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects to curb the proliferation of these deadly weapons, which continue to claim many lives. However, we reiterate the importance of the right and authority of every sovereign nation to the use of conventional weapons, proportionately, to protect its internal security and territorial integrity.

ASEAN takes note of the entry into force of the Arms Trade Treaty, as well as the conclusion of the first Conference of States Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty, held in Cancún, Mexico, in August. ASEAN notes the establishment of the secretariat of the Arms Trade Treaty in Geneva, and looks forward to positive developments that further the goals and objectives of the Treaty.

ASEAN also takes note with satisfaction of the positive progress towards the operationalization of the ASEAN Regional Mine Action Centre, which serves as a regional centre of excellence in addressing the humanitarian aspect of the explosive remnants of war, and welcomes the successful convening of the second Regional Seminar on the Establishment of an ASEAN Regional Mine Action Centre in Siem Reap in August 2015.

ASEAN also takes note of the first Review Conference of the Convention on Cluster Munitions, held in September 2015 in Dubrovnik, Croatia.

ASEAN calls on Member States to continue lending support to two annual resolutions, entitled,

respectively, “Follow-up to the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the Legality of the Threat of Use of Nuclear Weapons”, sponsored by Malaysia, and “Nuclear disarmament”, sponsored by Myanmar. Both resolutions underscore the priority and importance attached to nuclear disarmament by ASEAN member States.

In conclusion, ASEAN emphasizes the need for redoubling our efforts to reach the goal of general and complete disarmament, with particular and urgent attention given to the goal of a nuclear-weapons-free world.

Mr. Sauer (Finland): I take the floor on behalf of the Nordic countries: Denmark, Iceland, Norway, Sweden and my own country, Finland.

We align ourselves with the statement of the European Union (EU), which is going to be delivered later today. I would like to start my intervention by congratulating you, Sir, and the Acting High Representative for Disarmament on assuming your offices.

The Nordic countries consider the rule of law a guiding principle in international affairs, including in disarmament and non-proliferation commitments. The international community needs to find ways to increase transparency, build confidence and both lay the ground for and pursue further action.

The Nordic countries subscribe to the humanitarian perspective in the debate on nuclear weapons. The horrific memories of Hiroshima and Nagasaki 70 years ago are testimonies to the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons use. We look forward to a continued dialogue to take this matter further.

We subscribe to a world free of nuclear weapons and to the principle of effective disarmament. It is essential that States possessing nuclear weapons engage in unilateral, bilateral, plurilateral and multilateral processes to rid the world of nuclear weapons. We call on the nuclear-weapon States to negotiate and finalize further and deeper cuts in their nuclear arsenals, giving due consideration also to the disarmament of non-strategic nuclear weapons.

We regret that the Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) was not able to agree on an outcome document. The NPT remains a key pillar of international security, and we urge all countries to sign and ratify the Treaty. At

the current seventieth session of the First Committee, we have a shared responsibility to act constructively to promote initiatives that can make an impact on bringing a world free of nuclear weapons closer.

We regret that the conference on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of weapons of mass destruction has not been convened. However, the goal of a Middle East zone free of weapons of mass destruction remains as crucial as ever. During the last review cycle, through the efforts of Ambassador Jaakko Laajava, a channel was opened for regional dialogue on issues of primary importance for the security of the Middle East. Hopefully, the dialogue will continue.

We should work on mechanisms that can take nuclear disarmament forward in an effective, systematic and results-oriented way. One option on the table is an open-ended working group to be established by the General Assembly. Such a working group should be inclusive, open to the participation of all countries. It is especially important that those countries possessing nuclear weapons constructively engage in the work of the group.

We continue to call on all States to ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, and especially those eight countries needed for the Treaty to enter into force. Negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty should be launched without delay. The report of the Group of Governmental Experts provides further impetus for such negotiations.

De-alerting nuclear weapon systems would decrease risks and contribute to increased confidence between States and can lead to disarmament, and we therefore urge all countries with nuclear weapons to decrease the operational readiness of nuclear weapons.

The International Partnership on Nuclear Verification Disarmament is an important contribution to achieving real progress on article VI of the NPT and an example of concrete work that can build capacity and confidence and help put in place technical building blocks for nuclear disarmament and a world free of nuclear weapons.

The Nuclear Security Summit has been highly important in securing, reducing and eliminating nuclear and radioactive materials. It has made the world more secure, and it is important that this effort be carried on beyond 2016.

We welcome the recent Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action on the Iranian nuclear programme, which is a

historic achievement for global disarmament. We look forward to the swift implementation by Iran of all its commitments in relation to the agreement, and expect Iran to engage fully with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to resolve all outstanding issues, including on the possible military dimension, in order to build international confidence in the exclusively peaceful nature of the Iranian nuclear programme. We also encourage Iran to proceed swiftly to ratify the Additional Protocol to its Safeguards Agreement. We give our full support to the IAEA in implementing the necessary verification and monitoring of Iran's nuclear-related commitments as set out in the Agreement. And we encourage countries to support the work of the IAEA in this regard, both politically and financially.

The international mission to remove and destroy Syria's chemical-weapons programme was unprecedented. This is the first time a country's arsenal of weapons of mass destruction has been removed in such a way. The Nordic countries are proud of having contributed to this end. We are deeply concerned about the use of chlorine as a weapon, as well as the alleged use of mustard gas. Any use of sulfur mustard or other chemical-warfare agent in the conflict is against the Chemical Weapons Convention and customary humanitarian law. We welcome that the fact-finding mission of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) will continue its work on establishing facts in this regard. We also welcome Security Council resolution 2235 (2015) on establishing a joint investigative mechanism of the United Nations and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons to determine responsibility for the use of chemicals as a weapon in Syria. We call on all parties to cooperate fully with the investigation. We urge the countries not parties to the Convention to accede to and become members of the OPCW. Moreover, State parties that have not fully implemented the Convention are urged to do so.

The Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction is a cornerstone of the international disarmament and non-proliferation architecture, and embodies a global norm against the development and use of such weapons. In the process leading up to the eighth Review Conference, we believe States parties should focus on areas where unity is possible and on pragmatic steps that can strengthen the Convention in

a constructive manner, including improved national implementation, confidence-building measures, assistance and protection, universalization of the Treaty and deepened collaboration of scientific and disarmament communities.

The Ebola outbreak in West Africa was a strong reminder of the dangers represented by the spread of communicable diseases. The Global Health Security Agenda represents a joint effort by nations, international organizations and civil society to accelerate progress towards a world safe and secure from infectious diseases. The Global Health Security Agenda aims at ensuring stronger response against biological threats and better preparedness in case of a major health emergency.

The Nordic countries also collaborate with the United Nations and other partners to keep the Secretary-General's investigative mechanism operational so that any allegations of use of biological weapons may be investigated promptly as a basis for appropriate action.

After years of hard work, the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) finally entered into force in December last year. The Nordic countries welcome the substantive outcome of the first Conference of State Parties. It provides a solid foundation for a functioning ATT regime. The ATT is a significant achievement for the international community. Designed to provide norms for responsible trade in conventional arms, it does much more. One landmark feature is that the ATT introduces the concept of serious acts of gender-based violence as a factor to take into account when making export assessments. The ATT also provides the international community with a new tool to address the unregulated and illicit trade in conventional arms by increasing the number of countries applying controls in this area. It is now in our hands to universalize the Treaty and ensure effective implementation.

Tackling the misuse, illicit and unregulated trade of small arms and light weapons and their ammunition is paramount to securing the conditions for development. In this regard, the Nordic countries welcome Security Council resolution 2220 (2015). Further work is also needed in the area of arms transports for the same purpose.

The use of anti-personnel mines is stigmatized, and clearance of contaminated areas and stockpile destruction have made significant progress. The Nordic countries strive to develop innovative methods in humanitarian mine action. Victim assistance must be

part of the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and be integrated into overall health-care efforts. The Convention on Cluster Munitions has, through their prohibition, succeeded in reducing human suffering caused by this weapon. We call upon all actors to refrain from such use and to fully observe the principles of international humanitarian law. The Dubrovnik Action Plan gives the States parties to the Convention effective tools to guide their work over the next five years.

The Nordic countries remain strongly committed to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) and its Protocols. Universalization and compliance with the provisions of the Convention and its annexed Protocols are issues of high importance. The CCW is a forum that brings together expertise from many different fields and enables us to address a wide variety of issues, both long-standing and newly emerging. We believe that humans should always bear the ultimate responsibility when dealing with questions of life and death. As States, we have an obligation to assess the legality of new weapons, and we therefore welcome the continued discussion of lethal autonomous weapon systems, within the framework of the CCW.

The Nordic countries believe that international rules are needed to make sure that space activities are conducted in a safe and sustainable manner. That could include an international code of conduct for activities in outer space and also other initiatives of a more binding nature. We look forward to discussing this issue further during our deliberations.

We, the Nordic countries, believe that it is important and timely to improve the gender balance in the sphere of disarmament and non-proliferation. The equal participation of men and women in disarmament analyses, delegations, discussions and decisions would increase the legitimacy, quality and effectiveness of disarmament agreements. There are not many low-hanging fruits in disarmament and non-proliferation, but this surely is one.

The United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) has been instrumental for the disarmament community in providing research and expertise. The Nordic countries have supported UNIDIR in words and deeds. We support efforts to find a durable funding structure for UNIDIR.

The Nordic countries aim to promote common understanding of today's disarmament, arms-control

and proliferation challenges, as well as concrete measures to address these challenges. We underline the need to uphold and strengthen the rule of law in international affairs. We strive to work to achieve these goals at the seventieth session of the First Committee.

Mr. Al-Shanfari (Oman) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like, on behalf of the States members of the League of Arab States, to extend to you, Sir, our sincere congratulations on your election to the chairmanship of the First Committee at its seventieth session. We are quite confident that your abilities and expertise will contribute to the success of the proceedings. I also congratulate the other members of the Bureau.

I would also like to express the support of the Group of Arab States for the statement made by the head of the Indonesian delegation on behalf of the countries of the Non-Aligned Movement.

The Group reiterates its principled positions on international security and disarmament. It emphasizes that consolidating peace, security and stability in the world cannot be achieved in the presence of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. This makes it necessary to rid humankind of these weapons and to use the enormous natural and human potential allocated to them for development instead.

The Group affirms that solutions agreed multilaterally in keeping with the Charter of the United Nations provide the sole sustainable method to address disarmament issues. We emphasize the need to renew and implement unilateral and collective cooperation in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation. The Group reiterates the pivotal importance of the Conference on Disarmament, the Disarmament Commission and the First Committee as multilateral frameworks in the field of disarmament, in keeping with the mandate specified by the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, held in 1978. That same session emphasized the paramount priority of universal nuclear disarmament.

In this connection, the Arab Group welcomes the commemoration of 26 September as the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons as a tangible step towards the elimination of all nuclear weapons. We call upon the international community to launch negotiations on a comprehensive and non-discriminatory treaty to prohibit the use, acquisition, production and stockpiling of nuclear

weapons, in addition to holding a high-level international conference on nuclear disarmament no later than 2018, in order to review the progress achieved on this vital matter, in accordance with resolution 68/32, of 5 December 2013.

The Arab Group will continue to contribute positively to global efforts towards nuclear disarmament. We have participated effectively in all multilateral disarmament forums and through the accession of all Arab States parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), subjecting all their nuclear installations to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) comprehensive safeguards regime. Israel has not done so, despite all relevant international resolutions and demands.

The Group voices concern at the continued failure to make tangible progress at the nuclear disarmament level and the recurrent failure to implement the second resolution adopted by the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference, as well as the 13 steps adopted by the 2000 Review Conference and the contents of the plan of action adopted at the 2010 Review Conference. Nuclear-weapon States clearly evade and avoid elaborating any specific time frames to implement their international obligations with a view to eliminating nuclear weapons.

The Arab Group rejects nuclear-weapon States' military doctrines that permit the use of nuclear weapons, even against non-nuclear States. In this regard, we affirm that the final and complete elimination of nuclear weapons, in keeping with article VI of the NPT, is the sole guarantee of the non-use of such weapons. The Group calls for the achievement of the universality of the NPT, which is the fundamental pillar of the multilateral disarmament regime and international security. We must respect the balance between the pillars of the NPT — nuclear disarmament, the prohibition of the spread of nuclear weapons, and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy — correct the imbalance resulting from some focusing on non-proliferation at the expense of disarmament, and strengthen cooperation on the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, in keeping with international legal obligations concluded with the IAEA.

The failure of this year's NPT Review Conference and the delay of some nuclear Powers in fulfilling their obligations make it necessary for us to redouble our efforts with a view to expediting movement towards

the full elimination of nuclear weapons. We call for the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones throughout the world, including in the Middle East. In that regard, we would like to emphasize the need to take immediate measures and effective steps in accordance with the annual Arab resolution before the General Assembly entitled "The establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East". Furthermore, we would like to express our concern at the level of danger and insecurity in the region, given Israel's refusal to adhere to the NPT. It is the only party that has not acceded to the Treaty and still refuses to subject its nuclear facilities to the safeguards system of the International Atomic Energy Agency. That constitutes a clear threat to the security and safety of the Middle East.

We furthermore emphasize that establishing a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East constitutes a main pillar of the NPT, which is equal in importance to the other two pillars. Since 1995, we have not witnessed any tangible progress on that score, notwithstanding the fact that the resolution was an integral part of the conclusions of the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference. On the contrary, we have witnessed procrastination and delay, as well as renegeing on the agreed obligations. That leads the Arab States to reconsider their strategies vis-à-vis the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones and weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East region.

Given the non-implementation of the action plan adopted by consensus in 2010, the Arab Group tried to find a way out of the impasse in the course of the latest Review Conference, presenting a paper that had been adopted by the Non-Aligned Movement. That positive approach was met with disappointing efforts by the United States, the United Kingdom and Canada, which impeded international consensus and the adoption of an outcome document. Those efforts lead us to question the seriousness of those depositary States and their willingness to respect their political and moral obligations.

Ridding the Middle East of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction is a collective international responsibility. We have complied with that obligation. The other parties must do the same, otherwise the NPT will be at risk, and that could threaten the stability of the disarmament regime and non-proliferation in general.

The Arab Group reiterates the need to enable the Conference on Disarmament to fulfil its role as the sole multilateral negotiating forum in the field of disarmament in the United Nations. The current stagnation in its work is not due to any shortcoming of the Conference, but rather to the absence of political will. We therefore emphasize the need to maintain the primary role of the Conference on Disarmament and not to waste efforts by establishing other parallel entities. The four agenda items before the Conference — nuclear non-proliferation, a fissile material cut-off treaty, the prohibition of an arms race in outer space and negative security safeguards — are all complementary. We firmly believe that outer space must be used only for peaceful purposes. The relevant international legal instruments affirm that outer space must be used only for peaceful purposes and that weapons must not be placed therein.

With regard to conventional weapons, we stress the need to implement the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects with a view to enabling Member States to combat that dangerous phenomenon, which leads to various threats in the light of the acquisition of such weapons by non-State actors.

With regard to electronic information security, international cooperation must be strengthened to foster information security and protect States' national interests. States must be protected from subversive activities targeting their facilities through the worldwide web.

In conclusion, the Arab Group has thus presented its priorities on the matters to be discussed in the course of the seventieth session. It acknowledges that the agenda before us calls on us to undertake an onerous task. However, that should not stifle our ambitions; rather, it should help us further endeavour to abide by the principles of equality, non-selectivity and the avoidance of double standards. Those principles are necessary to generate the requisite political will for the success of our work. The Arab Group reiterates its commitment to the implementation of those principles. It is also committed to working with the Committee and the other members with a view to achieving progress in all matters relating to international security and disarmament.

Mr. Combrink (South Africa): I have the honour to take the floor on behalf of the members of the New Agenda Coalition, namely, Brazil, Egypt, Ireland,

Mexico, New Zealand and my own country, South Africa. At the outset, the New Agenda Coalition would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the chairmanship of the First Committee for this year. We assure you of our full cooperation and support with a view to the successful conclusion of our deliberations during the next four weeks.

As we have done in the past, the New Agenda Coalition will present a draft resolution to the Committee, which will be introduced during the thematic debate on nuclear weapons.

In founding the New Agenda Coalition in 1998, the Foreign Ministers of our respective countries were motivated by the continued threat to humankind posed by the continued existence of nuclear weapons and the possibility of the use or threat of use of those weapons. That threat continues to drive the New Agenda Coalition in advocating the cause of nuclear disarmament for the achievement and maintenance of a world free of nuclear weapons.

While there has been progress in limiting the horizontal proliferation of nuclear weapons, the New Agenda Coalition remains concerned that there has been limited progress on nuclear disarmament, despite the fact that nuclear disarmament has been on the international agenda since nuclear weapons were first used. Sixty-nine years after the General Assembly sought to initiate a process to achieve

“the elimination from national armaments of atomic weapons and of all other major weapons adaptable for mass destruction” (*resolution 1 (I), para. 5 (c)*),

much remains to be done to achieve and maintain a nuclear-weapon-free world.

Given the scale of devastation that nuclear weapons are designed to inflict, the fact that their consequences cannot be constrained within national borders and the ever-increasing risk associated with a nuclear-weapon detonation, the continued reliance upon them in security doctrines and concepts is immoral, unethical and provides a motivation to proliferate. For New Agenda Coalition, there can never be the right hands for wrong weapons.

As you are aware, Sir, this year's session of the First Committee coincides with the seventieth anniversary of the United Nations. It also coincides with the seventieth anniversary of the nuclear bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Those key milestones represent a

historic opportunity for all States to advance nuclear disarmament. They remind us of the immense trail of death and destruction resulting from the first use of atomic weapons, which should never be used again under any circumstances.

The New Agenda Coalition therefore deeply regrets the lack of any substantive outcome at the 2015 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). We believe that was a missed opportunity that could have contributed to enhancing progress towards the full implementation of commitments and obligations agreed to at the 1995, 2000 and 2010 Review Conferences. The New Agenda Coalition is gravely concerned about the impact of that development on the credibility of the NPT and on the nuclear-disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation regime.

Despite the challenges, the New Agenda Coalition welcomes the renewed attention to the catastrophic humanitarian consequences and risks associated with nuclear weapons on the part of the international community since 2010, and the growing awareness that those concerns should underpin the vital need for nuclear disarmament and the urgency of achieving and maintaining a nuclear-weapon-free world. We therefore welcome the compelling evidence presented at the Conferences on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons that detailed the catastrophic consequences that would result from a nuclear-weapon detonation. That initiative, together with the crucial role that civil society plays, has managed to generate a growing awareness of the threat that even a single nuclear weapon poses to humankind, let alone the estimated 16,400 weapons that still exist, many on high-alert status and ready to deploy within minutes.

The New Agenda Coalition continues to believe that the NPT remains the cornerstone of the nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation regime. However, we have been disappointed by the slow pace of nuclear disarmament, at both the regional and global levels, despite successive undertakings from the nuclear-weapon States. Although undertakings are not lacking in this field, concrete progress is. Indeed, notwithstanding the significant reductions that have been made since Cold War highs, bilateral reductions are no substitute for multilateral disarmament implemented in accordance with the principles of irreversibility, verifiability and transparency.

The New Agenda Coalition expresses disappointment and deep concern that the 1995 resolution on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction has yet to be implemented. We therefore call upon all States parties to the NPT to work towards its full implementation, which is inextricably linked to the indefinite extension of the Treaty.

It is now time that the international community translate words into concrete action backed by clear benchmarks and timelines. The NAC believes that the nuclear-weapon States should not only implement their previous commitments and obligations, but should strive to build on the agreements reached in 1995, 2000 and 2010, as that would contribute to taking forward the aims and purpose of the Treaty.

Nuclear disarmament is not only an international legal obligation, but also a moral and ethical imperative. In spite of the growing international consensus regarding the illegitimacy of nuclear weapons, they remain at the heart of the security doctrines of the nuclear-weapon States and those party to regional alliances with the nuclear-weapon States. Far from strengthening international peace and security, that state of affairs serves to weaken it, aggravating international tensions and conflict and jeopardizing the collective well-being of all States and peoples. It further engenders a perception that nuclear-weapon States harbour aspirations for the indefinite possession of such weapons, contrary to their legal obligations and commitments.

In a world where the basic human needs of billions of people are not being met, the growing spending on nuclear weapons is both unacceptable and unsustainable. The allocation of vast resources to retain and modernize nuclear weapons is at odds with international aspirations to development, as expressed recently by world leaders with regard to the achievement of the 2015 Sustainable Development Goals. Rather than squandering resources on nuclear weapons, Governments should direct much-needed resources towards socioeconomic development.

Given that more than four decades have passed since the entry into force of the NPT, the status quo on nuclear disarmament is no longer acceptable. The New Agenda Coalition believes that it is now time for States to deliver on their commitment to the elimination of nuclear weapons, in line with their obligations under article VI of the NPT, together with the subsequent

unequivocal undertaking made by the nuclear-weapons States to eliminate their nuclear arsenals. As such, there is an urgent need for the commencement of negotiations, in good faith, on nuclear disarmament. Unless and until all options for the negotiation of effective measures are explored, the present and unacceptably slow pace of disarmament will continue. In that regard, we urge all States to explore options and to support efforts to identify, elaborate and negotiate legally binding effective measures for nuclear disarmament in keeping with the spirit and purpose of resolution 1 (I), of 24 January 1946, and article VI of the NPT.

The New Agenda Coalition urges all States parties to seize the opportunity of this session of the First Committee to make a difference on nuclear disarmament.

Mr. Charles (Trinidad and Tobago): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the 14 States members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) on agenda items 88 to 105. CARICOM is pleased that you, Mr. Chair, have been selected to preside over our deliberations, taking into consideration your years of experience, not only as a diplomat but as a negotiator and a bridge-builder. At the same time, we also offer our congratulations to the other members of the Bureau on their elections. As with their predecessors, they can rest assured of the support of all 14 States members of CARICOM in ensuring that the outcome of the work of the First Committee during this landmark seventieth session of the United Nations is one that will chart a new course and herald a new dawn with regard to the role of the First Committee in the maintenance of international peace and security. We also pay tribute to your predecessor, Ambassador Rattray of Jamaica, for the work he did as Chair of the Committee at its sixty-ninth session.

As usual, we align ourselves with the statement delivered by the Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, to which all CARICOM States belong.

A few days ago, Member States adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (resolution 70/1). The overarching framework of that landmark document will guide global development for the next 15 years. CARICOM echoes the words of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon that the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda encompasses a universal, transformative and integrated agenda that heralds a historic turning

point for our world. We should use those words as a benchmark as we move forward.

CARICOM is of the view that the First Committee has a fundamental role to play in assisting States to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals — particularly Goal 16, on the promotion of peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development.

In our region, we are ever mindful that the primary responsibility of the United Nations is the maintenance of international peace and security. This debate of the First Committee comes at a time when peace and security are absent from so many parts of the world. That is a matter of grave concern, and should indeed be of grave concern to all Member States 70 years after the establishment of the United Nations.

In recent times, the international community has been forced to acknowledge that the constantly changing global security architecture has rendered no State or group of States — big or small — immune from the effects of international terrorism, the increasing influence of non-State actors, new proliferation threats and the escalation of strife and conflict between and among States. Consequently, CARICOM encourages all States to act consistently within the framework of the Charter of the United Nations on all matters related to disarmament and international security and to seek to enforce the decisions that are adopted. We believe that the lack of enforcement of decisions of the General Assembly by the First Committee is partly responsible for some of the problems we encounter as members of the international community.

Transboundary criminal activities continue to pose serious threats to the security and stability of our subregion. Those include, but are not restricted to, illicit trafficking in drugs, arms and ammunition, money laundering and cybercrime. We have taken some initiatives to help us to confront those problems, including developing a mechanism — articulated in the CARICOM Strategic Plan 2015-2019 — to build resilience in the face of those clear and present dangers. A specific CARICOM crime and security strategy was approved by our Heads of Government in 2013. Its main goal is to significantly improve citizen security by creating a safe, just and free community, while simultaneously improving the economic viability of our region.

The illicit arms trade has resulted in an increase in homicide rates across the region. Statistics reveal that

approximately 70 per cent of murders in CARICOM are due to the use of small arms. That trade has also exacerbated the incidence of gang-related violence in some of our capitals. Gang-related violence and other illicit uses of small arms continue to undermine the economic and social development of a number of CARICOM States, as very valuable — and, I should add, significant — financial and other resources from our national budgets have to be set aside to tackle the scourge of illicit arms trafficking.

Although CARICOM has crafted a regional solution to tackle those problems, we are ever-cognizant of the need for cooperation at the multilateral level. It is for that reason that we in CARICOM subscribe fully to the object and purpose of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) and are moving assiduously towards its full implementation in our jurisdictions. We remain firm in our conviction that the ATT can contribute significantly to reducing the suffering of many of our citizens and of countless people around the world, especially women and children who live daily under the deadly and devastating impact of the unregulated trade in conventional arms. At the same time, CARICOM acknowledges that, for the ATT to be a universal success, it must be implemented in full and in good faith by all States parties and signatories, including the major manufacturers, exporters and importers of conventional weapons.

We have also found non-binding legal agreements to be of tremendous assistance in our attempts to address the illicit trade in arms in our region. We once more reiterate the importance we attach to the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. For us, it is an important companion instrument in mobilizing international cooperation to curb the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects.

CARICOM is of the view that the Programme of Action should be strengthened. We look forward to actively participating in the sixth Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action, to be held in June 2016. It is CARICOM's hope that the meeting next year will provide a platform to achieve clear and tangible results that could be utilized in the run-up to, and possibly the outcome of, the 2018 third review meeting. For us in CARICOM, the sixth Biennial Meeting of States must include, as one of its major outcomes, a mechanism for

strengthening international assistance and cooperation, as well as the sharing of best practices.

CARICOM also continues to embrace the support provided by United Nations organizations in our region, such as the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, which has supported and assisted member States of CARICOM in capacity-building measures and technical assistance programmes. We look forward to continued collaboration with that regional entity.

CARICOM welcomed the observance of the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons on 26 September of last year. As the international community, we must recognize that the world has not been engulfed in a nuclear war in the 70 years of the existence of the United Nations. However, CARICOM wishes to reiterate that the utilization of the nuclear option in our contemporary world would have more severe humanitarian and other consequences for all peoples of the world, which could be more deleterious than what happened in 1945. In that regard, we reiterate our call for the denuclearization of all regions of the world and are proud to belong to the region that established the first nuclear-weapon-free zone under the Treaty of Tlateloco. We also hold firmly to the view that the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons constitute a crime against humanity and a violation of international law, including international humanitarian law and the Charter of the United Nations.

As firm believers in the rule of law, we wish to indicate that treaty obligations are sacred and must be carried out fully, effectively and in good faith. Consequently, we request all States parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) to honour their obligations that flow from that important instrument.

CARICOM also views the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) as a complementary instrument to the NPT, as it provides the last and most visible barrier against nuclear-weapon testing. As we have done in the past, we continue to call for the ratification of the CTBT by the remaining annex 2 countries to enable the early entry into force — although it is not so early anymore — of the Treaty.

At the same time, we lament the fact that, 45 years after the NPT entered into force, the international community is still unable to undertake comprehensive

negotiations on nuclear disarmament. We have witnessed the discord that continues to plague the negotiations, and the inability of the 2015 NPT Review Conference to reach agreement on the final draft document.

CARICOM reiterates its strong opposition to the shipment of nuclear waste through the Caribbean Sea. The Caribbean Sea and its living and non-living resources contribute significantly to our economic and social development. The activities associated with the transportation of nuclear waste in our Caribbean Sea — our patrimony and our heritage — continue to pose a threat to the security, viability and sustainable development of our region. We ask all those involved to recognize, as we have done, the Caribbean Sea as a zone of peace.

During the seventieth anniversary of the United Nations, the First Committee has another opportunity to engage in progressive dialogue and to begin meaningful negotiations on the disarmament and non-proliferation agendas. Future generations will look back at this session of the First Committee and use the period as a yardstick to measure progress, especially as it relates to global peace and security. CARICOM will continue to play its part to ensure the deliberations of the First Committee are successful.

Mrs. Ogwu (Nigeria): At the outset, allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on behalf of the African Group, on your election as the Chair of the First Committee at the seventieth session of the General Assembly. As you steer the ship of the First Committee, the Group believes that your remarkable experience and compassion will guide our debates and negotiations and decisions. The Group assures you of its full cooperation as we deliberate on disarmament and peace and security issues. The Group also congratulates other members of the Bureau on their elections and promises to work constructively with the entire team. The African Group takes this opportunity to commend the Chair's predecessor, Mr. Rattray, for his astute leadership and laudable efforts.

The Group aligns itself with the statement delivered earlier on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries by Mr. Abdurrahman Mohammad Fachir, Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia.

The sixty-ninth session of the Assembly witnessed renewed efforts to address a wide spectrum of disarmament and international security issues. The Group notes major events such as the entry into force of

the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) and its First Conference of States Parties, the Second Open-ended Meeting of Governmental Experts under the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, and the Ninth Review Conference of the States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), among others. In the same vein, a number of meetings discussed wide-ranging issues on cyberspace and outer space activities.

International security has been deteriorating, and the world is facing immense peace and security challenges with threats of terrorism on the increase. It is in that regard that the Group underscores the absolute validity of multilateral diplomacy in the field of disarmament, non-proliferation and international security, and reiterates that there are no substitutes for a multilateral approach to addressing global disarmament issues, in accordance with the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

As the international community continues to await the realization of the goal of the total elimination of nuclear weapons, the African Group seeks more profound and concrete measures in pursuit of the objective of nuclear disarmament. It is evident that the current approach has not been able to sufficiently deliver tangible outcomes that would ensure the realization of the overall goal and objectives of nuclear disarmament.

Seventy years after the use of atomic bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, we must speak with unanimity on the goal of ensuring a world free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction. We must also raise our voices against the slow pace at which the nuclear-weapon States are dismantling these weapons. In that context, the Group welcomes the second General Assembly informal plenary meeting in commemoration of the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons, and underscores the importance of resolution 69/58 as an integral part of that multilateral disarmament effort. The full implementation of the resolution, particularly through the commencement of negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament for the conclusion of a comprehensive convention on nuclear weapons, will ensure that concrete progress is made towards the objective of eliminating those weapons.

For the African Group, the highest priority remains nuclear disarmament and the achievement of the total elimination of nuclear weapons, which is the overall

objective of the NPT. The Group regrets the inability of the ninth NPT Review Conference to command the consensus desired on a final draft outcome document, despite the concerted efforts of non-nuclear-weapon States, particularly from Africa. The Group continues to highlight the threat posed to humankind by the continued existence of nuclear weapons and insists on the implementation of all agreed measures and undertakings by the nuclear-weapon States in the context of the Treaty. It is hoped that the setback of the Review Conference will serve as a stark reminder of the need to renew commitments to the overall objectives of the Treaty. In that context, the Group reiterates its deep concern about the slow pace of progress towards nuclear disarmament, as well as the lack of progress by the nuclear-weapon States to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals, in accordance with their legal obligations and undertakings.

The African Group reaffirms the useful purposes of nuclear-weapon-free zones in the consolidation of the NPT, as well as their contributions to addressing nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation across all regions of the world. The Treaties of Pelindaba, Tlatelolco, Rarotonga, Bangkok, the Central Asian Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone, and Mongolia's nuclear-weapon-free status significantly contribute to the overall objective of a world free of nuclear weapons. They enhance global and regional peace and security, strengthen the nuclear non-proliferation regime and contribute to the realization of the objectives of nuclear disarmament.

The Group remains committed to the Treaty of Pelindaba, which entered into force on 15 July 2009. That Treaty reaffirms the status of Africa as a nuclear-weapon-free zone and provides a shield for the African territory, including by preventing the stationing of nuclear explosive devices on the continent and prohibiting testing of those weapons, among others. In that regard, the African Group restates its deep concern at the fact that commitments and obligations of the resolution on the Middle East adopted by the 1995 Review and Extension Conference, and the action plan of the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons regarding the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East, have not been implemented as agreed. The Group is unequivocal in its disappointment at the inability to convene the agreed conference on the

establishment of such a zone in the Middle East, which should have been held in 2012. The 1995 resolution remains an integral and essential part of the package and the basis upon which consensus was reached on the indefinite extension of the NPT in 1995. The Group will continue to highlight the validity of those commitments and obligations until they are fully implemented.

The Group underlines the importance of the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and, in that regard, stresses the central role of the International Atomic Energy Agency, which ensures the commitment of States to the implementation of the safeguards agreements, and provides technical assistance by maximizing the use of science and technology for socioeconomic development.

The African Group reiterates its serious concern about the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons and continues to call on States, particularly the nuclear-weapon States, to consider the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of the use of those weapons on human health, the environment and vital economic resources, among others. The Group also calls on States to take the necessary measures to dismantle, and renounce the use of, those weapons. It is in that context that the Group strongly supports the call for banning nuclear weapons — the only weapon of mass destruction not prohibited by an international legal instrument.

The continued existence and possession of nuclear weapons do not guarantee security; rather, they are an affirmation of the risks of their potential use. Our world, including outer space, must be free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. The presence of nuclear weapons on this planet constitutes an existential threat to global peace and the future survival of the human race. The Group stresses the need for the nuclear-weapon States to cease their further modernization, upgrading and refurbishment, or extension of the lives of their nuclear weapons and related facilities.

The African Group also stresses the importance of achieving universal adherence to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), bearing in mind the special responsibilities of the nuclear-weapon States in that regard. The CTBT offers a hope for halting the further development and proliferation of nuclear weapons, thereby contributing to the goal of nuclear disarmament. The Group welcomes the convening of the ninth Ministerial Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the CTBT, on 29 September 2015, and

commends Angola's recent ratification of the Treaty. The Group supports the international community's continuing commitment to promoting the CTBT, a treaty that could serve as a threshold for promoting the process of nuclear disarmament. We encourage the remaining annex 2 countries, in particular the nuclear-weapon States, and those yet to accede to the NPT to sign and ratify the CTBT.

The African Group joins other Member States in reaffirming the importance of the work entrusted to the Conference on Disarmament (CD). The Group expresses its concern at the nineteenth year of impasse, which has prevented the CD from fulfilling its mandate as the world's single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum. The Group calls on the CD to commence nuclear disarmament negotiations without further delay. A reinvigorated CD should be supported to deliver on its fundamental objectives.

The Group expresses concern over the inability of the United Nations Disarmament Commission to reach consensus on the recommendations for its agenda items. It stresses the importance of the United Nations disarmament machinery and emphasizes the significance not only of preserving the Commission, but of realizing its deliberative objectives. The Group looks forward to a successful deliberation of the agenda items before the Commission in this cycle.

The African Group acknowledges the entry into force of the ATT, on 24 December 2014, as well as its successful Conference of States Parties held in Cancún, Mexico. The Group calls for the appropriate implementation of the ATT as the only legally binding instrument on the international transfer of conventional arms, in a balanced and objective manner that protects the interests of all States and not just the major international producing and exporting States. The Group reaffirms the sovereign right of States to acquire, manufacture, export, import and retain conventional arms and their parts and components for their self-defence and security needs in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations. The full implementation of the Treaty is practically achievable with the cooperation of all. The Group acknowledges that unregulated conventional arms transfers fuel the illicit trade. The Group further urges major arms suppliers to ratify the Treaty and promote its implementation.

The African Group remains deeply concerned about the illicit trade, transfer, manufacture, possession

and circulation of small arms and light weapons, their excessive accumulation and uncontrolled spread in many regions of the world, particularly in Africa. The Group remains committed to the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. Having successfully concluded the meeting of governmental experts on the implementation of the Programme of Action early this year, the Group urges all States to continue to fulfil their obligations with regard to reporting and technological transfers and by ensuring the unhindered flow of international cooperation and assistance as mandated by the Programme of Action.

In conclusion, the African Group wishes to reiterate the critical importance of political will and transparency in addressing international disarmament and security issues. The Group believes that our deliberations in the coming days should be guided by the need to advance the work of the First Committee and enhance the cause of peace.

The African Group will submit three draft resolutions in the course of our meetings, for which we seek the support of all delegations. They concern the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty, the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa, and the prohibition of the dumping of radioactive wastes.

The Chair: I now give the floor to the observer of the European Union.

Mr. Gatt-Rutter (European Union): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU). The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Iceland, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia, align themselves with this statement.

Let me first of all congratulate you, Mr. Chair, on taking up your important post. We pledge our full support. It gives us great pleasure to see an observer from an EU member State chairing the proceedings of the First Committee.

I would like to start by reaffirming the EU's commitment to treaty-based nuclear disarmament and arms control and the promotion of universal adherence to, and the full implementation of, all non-proliferation and disarmament treaties and conventions.

I would like to refer to recent positive developments, while underlining the importance of effective multilateralism and international cooperation. The EU welcomes the historic agreement of 14 July between the E3+3 and Iran on the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), in full conformity with the principles of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). On the basis of Security Council resolution 2231 (2015) and the JCPOA, the EU fully supports the long-term mission of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) with regard to the verification and monitoring of Iran's nuclear-related commitments for the full duration of those commitments. Their full and sustained implementation, which will be facilitated by the application and subsequent necessary ratification of an additional protocol to Iran's Safeguards Agreement, as foreseen in the agreement, will provide the international community with the necessary assurances on the exclusively peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear programme, and will contribute positively to regional and international peace and security.

The EU also looks forward to the full and timely implementation of the road map for the clarification of past and present outstanding issues regarding Iran's nuclear programme, agreed on 14 July between the IAEA and Iran. It is important that Iran cooperate fully with the Agency regarding possible military dimensions, as agreed in the road map. The EU underlines that the resolution of all outstanding issues will be essential to the implementation of the JCPOA.

The Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) is a landmark instrument that provides for robust and effective common international standards for the regulation of the international trade in conventional arms, making it more responsible and transparent while simultaneously reducing the illicit trade of arms. Importantly, the ATT introduces the concept of serious acts of gender-based violence as a factor to take into account when making export assessments.

The EU warmly welcomes the successful outcome of the first Conference of States Parties to the ATT, held in Cancún in August. The Conference took important substantive and operational decisions, including workable rules of procedure, sound financial and management rules, clarity on the seat of the secretariat and the appointment of its interim head. Those decisions provide solid foundations for a functioning ATT regime. It is our collective responsibility to preserve that momentum for the considerable work ahead towards

increased transparency, effective implementation and universalization. We look forward to the extraordinary meeting of States parties to be held in Geneva in early 2016 to decide on budgetary issues and consider for adoption the draft proposal on the administrative arrangements concerning the newly established ATT secretariat. We also forward to the next Conference of States Parties, in Geneva in 2016, to concentrate on the substantive work.

The European Union regards the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) as the cornerstone of the global nuclear non-proliferation regime — the essential foundation for the pursuit of nuclear disarmament in accordance with article VI of the NPT — as well as an important element in the further development of nuclear energy applications for peaceful purposes. A key priority for the EU is to uphold and preserve the NPT as a multilateral instrument for reinforcing international peace, security and stability. It is important to universalize the NPT. The EU calls upon those States that have not yet done so to join the Treaty as non-nuclear-weapon States.

While regretting that it was not possible to reach consensus on a final document at the 2015 NPT Review Conference, and bearing in mind the current severe security environment, we reiterate the European Union's strong support for all three pillars of the Treaty and call for the implementation of all commitments assumed under it or undertaken during previous Review Conferences.

The EU reaffirms its support for the resolution on the Middle East adopted by the 1995 Review and Extension Conference, and recalls the affirmation of its goals and objectives by the 2000 and the 2010 Review Conferences. We consider the 1995 resolution as valid until its goals and objectives are achieved. The EU deeply regrets that the conference on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems has not been convened. We maintain the view that dialogue and building confidence among all stakeholders is the only sustainable way to agree on arrangements for a meaningful conference, to be attended by all States of the Middle East on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at by them, as decided by the 2010 Review Conference. We also wish to express our appreciation to Ambassador Jaakko Laajava for his hard work and unstinting efforts as facilitator.

Recent reports of the use of chlorine as a chemical weapon in Syria reinforce the need for a resolute and global approach to that threat. We stand united in condemning, in the strongest terms, all use, in Syria or anywhere else, by anyone and under any circumstances, of chemical weapons, which constitutes a violation of international law, a war crime and a crime against humanity. There can be no impunity, and perpetrators of such horrific attacks must be held accountable.

Over the past year, the international community cooperated effectively and acted promptly in carrying out the destruction of Syria's declared chemical-weapons stockpile, in line with Security Council resolution 2118 (2015) and the decision by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) Executive Council. The removal and ongoing destruction of the declared Syrian chemicals and of the remaining production facilities constitute a significant step towards the necessary complete and irreversible dismantling of the Syrian chemical-weapons programme. The EU contributed €17 million for the OPCW-United Nations joint plan on the elimination of Syria's chemical weapons. In addition, several EU member States made important financial and other contributions to support the plan and provided in-kind assistance for the removal, transportation and destruction of chemical materials.

The European Union has been gravely concerned about the systematic and repeated use of chlorine as a chemical weapon since the reports of the OPCW fact-finding mission set up to establish the facts concerning those allegations confirmed such use last year. New similar allegations continue to be made. We share the view that the evidence presented by the mission is substantial. That includes reports of the use of helicopters, a capability that only the Syrian regime possesses. We support the Director-General's decision that the mission continue its work, and stress that those individuals responsible for any use of chemicals as weapons, including chlorine or any other toxic chemical, must be held accountable. In the same vein, we welcome the adoption of Security Council resolution 2235 (2015), which establishes an OPCW-United Nations joint investigative mechanism to identify perpetrators responsible for chemical attacks in Syria. The mechanism must begin its work as soon as possible.

The risk that non-State actors may acquire weapons of mass destruction adds a further critical dimension.

The European Union is gravely concerned by the possibility of such actors acquiring radiological and nuclear materials for use in attacks. We call on States to combat effectively that threat for the international community. We are also gravely concerned about reports on the use of chemical weapons by non-State actors in Iraq and Syria.

It is vitally important to enhance international cooperation, both in the framework of the United Nations and among all Member States, in order to address these challenges. Since the beginning, we have been a staunch supporter of the robust and effective implementation of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004), with the objective of strengthening global efforts in that regard. New projects have been adopted with a view to continue promoting the full implementation of the resolution and to provide assistance to third countries in complying with their obligations under resolution 1540 (2004). We stand ready to assist in the comprehensive review of the implementation of the resolution due to take place next year. The European Union also calls on all States that have not yet done so to ratify the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism.

The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty is of crucial importance to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, and its entry into force and universalization remain top priorities for the EU. We will continue to promote that objective through our diplomatic and financial engagement, while bearing in mind the outcome of the ninth article XIV conference and the upcoming twentieth anniversary of the Treaty's opening for signature in 2016. Pending the entry into force of the Treaty, the EU calls on all States, including the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, to abide by the moratorium on nuclear-weapon-test explosions or any other nuclear explosion and to refrain from any action that would defeat the object and purpose of the Treaty. We reiterate our call on all States that have not yet done so, in particular those listed in annex 2 of the Treaty, to sign and ratify it.

The EU has condemned the nuclear tests conducted by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, as well as its threat of conducting another nuclear test, in outright violation of its international obligations, in particular under the relevant Security Council resolutions, namely, resolutions 1695 (2006), 1718 (2006), 1874 (2009), 2087 (2013) and 2094 (2013), which urge the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to abandon

its nuclear weapons and ballistic-missile programmes and return to compliance with the NPT and IAEA safeguards at an early date. The EU continues to attach the highest importance to the IAEA maintaining the preparedness to conduct monitoring and verification in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

The meeting convened at the United Nations Headquarters in New York from 27 to 31 July 2015 at the initiative of the European Union and with the assistance of the Office for Disarmament Affairs — entitled “Multilateral Negotiations on an International Code of Conduct for Outer Space Activities” — was very well attended, with delegations from 109 States and eight inter- and non-governmental organizations. We regret that negotiations could not commence after so many years of consultations, but we are confident that the rich and substantive discussions in New York, both on the substance and on the process, will help the international community to move forward.

The European Union continues to believe that responsible space-faring nations, as well as those who aspire to become such, should endeavour to agree on key principles in order to preserve outer space as a global common good. We hope that all nations will render their support to such a step, with a shared sense of urgency and responsibility for preserving outer space for the peaceful use by all humankind. We also hope that such an announcement could be part of wider efforts to facilitate future negotiations on an international code of conduct for outer space activities.

The promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women is an important priority for the European Union. We believe that the active participation and leadership of women in peace and security decision-making and action is crucial in achieving peace, security and sustainable development. The role of women in those areas, including disarmament and non-proliferation as well, should be enhanced by promoting gender consciousness and by the equal participation of women and men. The European Union is committed to the full implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and all the other relevant resolutions of the Council aimed at advancing the women and peace and security agenda. This year marks the fifteenth anniversary of the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), thus providing an additional opportunity to make our commitments on women and peace and security a reality.

Mr. Sandoval Mendiola (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): As this is the first time that Mexico takes the floor at this session, I would like to extend our sincerest congratulations to you, Mr. Chair, on your election to chair the work of the First Committee. The Mexican delegation stands ready to support you as you carry out your duties.

My delegation endorses the statement made earlier by the representative of South Africa on behalf of the New Agenda Coalition.

As it has done for 70 years, Mexico remains committed to disarmament — a goal that, as we have said repeatedly, was the subject of the Organization's first resolution, namely, resolution 1 (I). Since then, we have not ceased our efforts to achieve disarmament and maintain international peace and security. Our efforts are now focused on nuclear weapons, the only weapon of mass destruction not expressly prohibited by international law. That legal vacuum, which is also a moral imperative, drives us to continue our efforts to achieve our ultimate goal of a nuclear-weapon-free world.

A few days ago, the Organization gained new momentum that served to bolster one of its main pillars through the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (resolution 70/1). The new global development agenda is a very clear indication that, when there is political will among countries, it is possible to achieve common goals that will redound to the benefit all people, and not just to a few States. To achieve the Agenda, the Millennium Development Goals, set 15 years ago, had to be converted to figures so that their progress in several areas could be measured. That teaches us that it is possible to quantify any goal we set, including on disarmament. However, that momentum and progress is in contrast to the work carried out by the First Committee.

In addition, this year there were no positive developments in the other disarmament forums, given that the United Nations Disarmament Commission still does not submit recommendations to the General Assembly. Moreover, the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva has not been able to adopt, let alone implement, a substantive programme of work, despite the efforts made by Mexico during its presidency. Moreover, the ninth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) did not reach the consensus needed to adopt an outcome

document that would enable States parties to continue to meet and implement the Treaty. We also regret that it has not been possible to convene a conference to establish a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East.

It remains alarming and a cause for concern that there are almost 16,000 nuclear weapons in the possession of a few States, which consider them to be essential for their safety, thereby not only justifying their possession of them but also the possibility of using them and leaving the door open for them to be accidentally detonated. It is for that reason that Mexico reiterates the urgent need to ban the development, production, stockpiling, possession, transfer, use and modernization of nuclear weapons in order to eliminate and prevent the humanitarian impact on the environment, ecosystems, climate change, development, global health and food security, in addition to the risks associated with their existence, as demonstrated by the facts presented in three Conferences on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons — held in Oslo, Nayarit and Vienna.

Moreover, even in the absence of a final outcome document of the ninth NPT Review Conference, the debates that took place during that review cycle clearly showed the change in the parameters, goal, tone and balance of the discussion and commitment of all States parties regarding the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons. Mexico welcomes the fact that the humanitarian initiative is supported by almost all of the Organization's Members — just over 80 per cent — which believe that concern about the impact of nuclear weapons is the basis for achieving disarmament and non-proliferation and reiterate that such weapons should not be used again under any circumstances and that they should be stigmatized, banned by international law and eliminated. Despite the lack of progress on the commitments made by the Members of the Organization over the past year, we can, however, highlight some of the milestones that encourage us to continue in pursuit of our goal.

Mexico welcomes the Dubrovnik Political Declaration and Plan of Action, adopted by consensus at the first Review Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions, held last September, which constitute the platform for the activities we must carry out over the next five years with a view to achieving the universality and full implementation of the Convention at the national level, while providing care and assistance to the victims of the inhumane and indiscriminate

effects of such weapons and thus ensuring that they and their families are fully reintegrated into their communities. Mexico recognizes the Convention's value and importance, for during the five years it has been in force we have seen significant progress made in destroying cluster munitions, clearing contaminated areas and helping victims, besides its being one of the principal pillars of our disarmament architecture.

With regard to small arms and light weapons, Mexico reaffirms its commitment to the effective implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, with the goal of helping to end armed violence and promote peace and security. Similarly, the Arms Trade Treaty is a milestone when it comes to strengthening the international legal system for controlling transfers of conventional weapons and incorporating protective elements into international humanitarian and human rights law. And if we are to toughen the Treaty's impact, we should see it not as an isolated effort but rather encourage synergies between it and other instruments such as the Programme of Action and the Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition.

Mexico would like to take this opportunity to applaud the confidence and commitment displayed by States, international organizations and civil society that enabled the first Conference of States Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty, hosted by my country, to succeed in taking key decisions on the institutional and procedural structure of the Treaty regime, aimed at enabling its member States to promote the responsible trade in conventional arms and prevent their misuse or diversion to illicit markets. Now we have before us the new challenge of ensuring that the institutions we have decided to establish are implemented and of continuing to work for the Treaty's universality and application, nationally and regionally.

Sadly, in April we commemorated the first use of chemical weapons against civilians, a century ago, in the town of Ypres in 1915. Today, 100 years later, we are seeing the same dreadful and inhumane effects in casualties of chemical weapons in Syria. Such things should not be happening in this day and age. It is vital to ensure that our international treaties on disarmament and non-proliferation are universal and fully implemented. It is also essential that they have the

same status and importance that we accord the work of the international bodies created under their auspices. We once again urge States that have yet to sign or ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty to do so without further delay.

Lastly, Mexico would like to recognize what a great opportunity we have in the First Committee's efforts to take decisions and concrete actions that signify advances in the areas of disarmament and non-proliferation, with the shared goal of creating a world free of weapons of mass destruction and indiscriminate and inhumane evil and achieving a safer, more united and more peaceful world for every country and people on the planet.

Mr. Schmid (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): I would first like to congratulate you, Sir, on assuming the chairmanship of the First Committee, and to assure you of my delegation's full support and cooperation in accomplishing your task. I hope the hourglass will keep me to the time allowed, even if my text makes me forget that time is passing.

Nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament remain a global challenge, and we cannot afford to let up in our efforts in this area, because as long as there are countries that possess nuclear weapons and claim to rely on them for their national security, other countries will want to acquire them. Nonetheless, the record in this area for the past year is mixed. The historic Iran nuclear agreement, which will be formally adopted in the next few days, is a significant positive development, proof that diplomatic solutions are possible even for highly technical and politically complex issues. Switzerland welcomes the agreement and will support its implementation just as it did the negotiation process. We also urge the parties to the agreement to implement it as transparently and constructively as possible.

On the other hand, the inability of the States parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) to agree on a final document at their ninth Review Conference is a worrying development, reflecting a major disconnect between the expectations of non-nuclear-weapon States and the lack of openness on the part of States that possess such weapons, which apparently would even like to retreat from some of the commitments they have made in the past. The First Committee is particularly important in that context, because it is the first opportunity we have to assess the situation in order to decide how to move forward. It is

essential that all the States parties show a willingness to compromise if we are to overcome these differences.

There were intense debates during the NPT Review Conference about the measures, legal or otherwise, that we should take to achieve and maintain a nuclear-weapon-free world. We will have to take those discussions further and clarify various crucial and unresolved issues if we are to have any hope of making progress. We believe that establishing an open-ended working group under the auspices of the General Assembly would be a possible way to address this challenge, to the degree to which it enables us to have inclusive discussions on concrete, forward-looking measures.

Another area related to nuclear weapons that we should focus on is their humanitarian dimension. The work that has been done in this field has emphasized how crucial it is that we take immediate, concrete action in order to reduce the risks of a nuclear detonation and move as quickly as we can towards the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons. The NPT Review Conference also reflected the enormous power that dimension wields, along with the widely held view that it should guide our efforts to achieve a nuclear-weapon-free world. It is therefore both essential and appropriate that this dimension should figure largely in the General Assembly's work on nuclear disarmament, while enabling its Member States to unite around it.

Lastly, establishing a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East remains a key objective. Switzerland has actively supported efforts to work on the conference proposed for this in the Final Document of the 2010 NPT Review Conference, and is ready to continue to support any structured process in this area.

The speed with which the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) entered into force reflects the expectations we have of this new instrument. While a number of crucial decisions were taken at the First Conference of States Parties to the Treaty, which took place recently in Cancún, they are merely a first step, and there are many challenges still to be addressed. At this stage, universalization should be a major priority. So far, 73 States are party to the ATT, and its effectiveness will increase proportionally as it gets closer to universality. In our view, it is crucial that we adopt strong, concrete measures designed to achieve that. As for the work of implementing it, we are at the very beginning of that

process. In that regard, while reporting is one area that still needs defining, it is clear that we are very soon going to be dealing with a number of other issues.

In his message to the Conference on Disarmament at the beginning of its 2015 session, the Secretary-General laid particular stress on how the necessity of making progress on multilateral disarmament is more important than ever. We agree completely with his conclusions, given the significant number of current challenges to international security and the fact that they require a concerted response.

Outer space has become a critical area of infrastructure for every country in the world, but a number of developments have the potential to undermine its security and stability. We believe it is imperative that we establish a politically and legally binding normative framework that takes into account all of those threats. In that regard, we welcome the attention that the issue has received this year, including in a joint meeting to be held with the Fourth Committee.

Regarding the various challenges related to the use of information and communications technologies, it is essential that we strengthen the normative framework not just to guarantee security but also to ensure that cyberspace remains open and free. Three major challenges in this area are promoting confidence-building measures, reaffirming the validity of the existing international law while clarifying the way it is applied and developing standards for responsible conduct on the part of States. We welcome the progress made on all three by the General Assembly's Group of Governmental Experts on Developments in the Field of Information and Telecommunications in the Context of International Security, and we hope the Group can continue its work.

Finally, we welcome the fact that the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons is addressing the issue of lethal autonomous weapon systems. The work that has been done in the past two years has given us a better grasp of this emerging problem. We should also continue our efforts in this area, particularly with a view to specifying how to apply existing mechanisms and standards to such systems and to formulating initial practical results.

A functional and effective disarmament machinery is key if we are to respond to the Secretary-General's call for progress on multilateral disarmament. In that regard, we are concerned about the severe deadlock that exists in both the Conference on Disarmament and the United Nations Disarmament Commission. Our concern about the state of the United Nations disarmament machinery has been heightened by the current situation of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR). UNIDIR, established at the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, is an integral and essential part of that machinery and provides vital support to Member States and to various processes in our area of activity. Today UNIDIR is in an extremely precarious financial position that threatens its ability to continue its work. This is basically owing to the lack of a predictable financing system that would enable it to fund various posts that are essential to the functioning of the Institute as a whole. It is therefore crucial that the First Committee at its seventieth session take steps to support UNIDIR and enable it not only to continue its activities but to do so on the basis of a solid and sustainable financing system.

The Chair: We have exhausted the time available for this meeting. Before we adjourn, let me remind delegations once more that the rolling list of speakers for the general debate will close tomorrow, Friday, 9 October, at 6 p.m. All delegations interested in taking the floor should make every effort to inscribe their names on the list before the deadline.

The next formal meeting of the First Committee will be held tomorrow morning at 10 a.m. sharp in this conference room. In the meantime, as I announced at the end of our organizational meeting yesterday, we will have informal consultations from 3 to 5.30 p.m. this afternoon in the Trusteeship Council Chamber, in order to continue our consideration of the indicative timetable for thematic discussions as contained in document A/C.1/70/CRP.2.

I would like to remind delegations that a small symbolic gift from the Chair is on their desks, so I suggest they take it with them as a souvenir of this opening meeting.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.