



# General Assembly

Seventy-third session

## First Committee

**10**<sup>th</sup> meeting

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Official Records

*Chair:* Mr. Jinga. . . . . (Romania)

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

*The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.*

### High-level exchange on the current state of affairs in the field of disarmament and arms control

**The Acting Chair:** In accordance with its programme of work and the decision taken by the First Committee this morning, the Committee will first engage in an exchange with the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs and other high-level officials on the current state of affairs in the field of disarmament and arms control. Thereafter, the Committee will resume its general debate on all disarmament and international security agenda items to hear the remaining civil society representatives who are registered to speak. After the general debate concludes, the Committee will begin the thematic discussions on the nuclear weapons cluster.

It is now my pleasure to extend a warm welcome to today's panellists: Mrs. Izumi Nakamitsu, Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for Disarmament Affairs; Mr. Michael Møller, Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament; Mr. Robert Mardini, Permanent Observer of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to the United Nations, on behalf of the President of the ICRC; Mr. Marc-André Franche, Officer in Charge of the Peacebuilding Support Office, on behalf of the Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support; Mr. Amandeep Singh Gill, Executive Director of the Secretariat of the High-level Panel on Digital

Cooperation; Ms. Renata Dwan, Director of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research; and Ambassador Luiz Filipe de Macedo Soares, Secretary-General of the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean.

I will first give our panellists the floor to make their statements, after which we will change to an informal mode to afford delegations the opportunity to ask questions. I urge our panellists to kindly keep their statements concise so as to ensure that we have adequate time for an interactive discussion on the subject.

I now give the floor to the Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for Disarmament Affairs.

**Mrs. Nakamitsu** (High Representative for Disarmament Affairs): It is indeed a pleasure for me to be here on a daily basis.

I am grateful for the opportunity to participate in this exchange with members. As the First Committee is undoubtedly aware, this panel is mandated by resolution 58/316, in which the General Assembly decided that each Main Committee should introduce exchanges with senior officials of the Organization to enable a dynamic and candid exchange with heads of departments and offices, representatives of the Secretary-General and Special Rapporteurs.

Since 2004, that exchange has traditionally addressed the topic of the current state of affairs in the field of disarmament and arms control and has sought to include the heads of international organizations within the United Nations system in that field. In recent years, we have made various efforts to improve

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the effectiveness of this panel, including by requesting panellists to focus their remarks on specific topics of relevance to the current work of the Committee.

In an attempt to help meet the panel's initial objective, I suggested that discussions take place under a broad strategic framework, rather than from our narrow specific institutional perspectives. I proposed that we aim to place disarmament at the core of our international security discourse and to analyse it in relation to substantive areas of work closely linked to peace and security, such as the Sustainable Development Goals, humanitarian principles, sustaining peace efforts and, of course, the development of science and technology.

This year, the Committee is meeting during a particularly difficult moment for the strategic context surrounding disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control. The international security environment is in its worst state since the end of the Cold War. Key multilateral bodies remain in stalemate, and where there is consensus to add new urgent challenges to the agenda, progress almost never materializes at the necessary pace.

It was against that backdrop that the Secretary-General launched his Agenda for Disarmament (see A/73/168) earlier this year as his own initiative for the United Nations system. Since then, interested entities within the United Nations system have worked together on developing the implementation plan for that initiative. We made available the preliminary version of that plan on the website of the Office for Disarmament Affairs two weeks ago.

Before I get to the substantive part of my remarks, I will first elaborate briefly on the implementation plan, and I think there is some accompanying video to be shown in the background. We are committed to pursuing the implementation of the Secretary-General's initiative in the most transparent and innovative manner possible. To that end, we have set aside the traditional format of a static narrative report in favour of a twenty-first-century style dynamic and interactive web-based platform. On the website, one can access dedicated plans for each of the 40 actions under the agenda. Those contain additional information on their objectives, as well as on the specific steps and activities that the various United Nations entities are committed to pursuing.

As of today, 38 of the 40 plans have been published, with a combined total of 114 specific steps and activities.

The status of each of those activities is indicated on the website. The pages will be updated regularly and tracked over the lifetime of the implementation plan. Specific information will be added under each activity as work progresses. New activities will be added as we move towards the completion of each action. While there is no overall time frame for the fulfilment of the Agenda as a whole, we envisage that most planned activities will be completed by the end of 2021. At that time, we should be in a position to take stock of the status of the entire Agenda.

As a token of our appreciation, we would like to publicly identify on the website the States, regional organizations and other partners that have stepped forward to champion or support various actions. Those champions and supporters have committed to supporting activities in connection with the Agenda either financially or politically in a leadership capacity. I would like to ask the Committee to give us feedback on our implementation plan because we are also committed to improving the plan's new format.

I will devote the remainder of my time to the international situation relating to weapons of mass destruction and what entities within the United Nations system are committed to doing in order to facilitate dialogue and agreed measures to achieve common security for all.

In my opening remarks to this session of the Committee (see A/C.1/73/PV.2), I spoke of the problems and challenges we face. I will now focus on some possible solutions. Nuclear disarmament rightfully remains a top priority on our agenda. The need for measures to reduce the risks posed by the continued existence of nuclear weapons is more urgent in a deteriorated security environment. There can be no doubt that the shared norms against the use and the proliferation of nuclear weapons will continue to strengthen in the years ahead. Yet, without concrete action to implement past commitments, nuclear risks will grow in the face of constant modernization and the erosion of bilateral agreements.

In order to restore trust and confidence, all States that possess nuclear weapons should reaffirm that a nuclear war can never be won and must never be fought. Together with the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR), we will work together with all interested States to promote new measures to reduce nuclear risks, enhance stability

and increase international security in all available forms. We will also work with the parties to treaties that establish nuclear-weapon-free zones to enhance cooperation between regions and to consolidate the respective regimes.

In the area of other weapons of mass destruction, the still unanswered challenges to the norm against chemical weapons, coupled with developments in science and technology, have given rise to new concerns about the increasing likelihood of biological warfare. The use of a weaponized biological agent could bring unimaginable devastation and suffering to human populations.

In order to address that potential threat, we are increasing our capacity and readiness to respond to any use within our existing mandates. We will establish a standing capacity to prepare for and support independent investigations of any alleged use of biological weapons, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 42/37 C. As we work to find solutions to the financial situation facing the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction, we will also deepen our cooperation with our partners across the United Nations system to ensure a coordinated international response to any use of biological weapons.

As we strive to solve the lingering challenges of the atomic era, we must remain vigilant against the implications of developments in science and technology, some of which may enable new types of strategic weapons with potentially destabilizing effects.

I have been encouraged by the new momentum towards creating measures to prevent an arms race in outer space. In partnership with UNIDIR, we will be actively supporting existing processes on the elaboration of new legal arrangements, as well as measures to implement transparency and confidence-building measures, including political measures and other norms of responsible behaviour. We are also collaborating to study the implications of hypersonic weapons for disarmament, peace and security.

I have just reviewed a small number of activities that we will be pursuing in the interest of disarmament in order to save humankind. I look forward to the statements by the panellists, each of whom will speak to a different theme contained within the Secretary-General's Agenda for Disarmament. While I have

had the opportunity over the past couple of weeks to interact bilaterally with many gathered here today, I look forward to an open discussion on these issues today. I also count on everyone's support, which will be essential if we are to leverage our institutional capacity to facilitate members' search for common solutions. As I have mentioned many times before, we developed the Secretary-General's Agenda to help create momentum and reinvigorate disarmament, and to support the joint work of participants in that regard.

**The Acting Chair:** I thank Mrs. Nakamitsu for her statement. The Committee is honoured to have her here with us on a daily basis.

I now give the floor to the Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament.

**Mr. Møller** (Secretary-General, Conference on Disarmament): I greatly value the opportunity to participate in this First Committee meeting at a pivotal moment for this important decision-making forum for international security and disarmament.

Looking at the disarmament machinery today, no one can say that it has lived up to the aspirations of its architects over the past two decades. Forty years ago, the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament created much of the machinery with which we still work today. But at the turn of the century, multilateral disarmament institutions and normative regimes entered a state of political inertia just as the world became increasingly chaotic and the challenges of the new century increasingly outpaced the institutions and mindsets created in the previous one.

Global spending on weapons is increasing, nuclear-weapon States continue to modernize their arsenals and technologies are creating a new frontier and arms race. Only this year, we saw outrageous uses of chemical weapons with full impunity, despite their ban. As the High Representative just said, these are indeed troubling trends.

But this year also brought reason for cautious optimism. The Secretary-General launched his Agenda for Disarmament in Geneva, refocusing global attention on the need for robust disarmament, instilling much-needed urgency and signposting the way forward. We saw some positive developments in the Conference on Disarmament (CD) — the decision to establish five subsidiary bodies, the commitment to conducting substantive discussions and work, the achievement of

consensus and the adoption of reports from four of the five bodies. The only regrettable exception was the lack of consensus on negative security assurances.

I would invite participants to explore the detailed annexes to the CD's report (A/73/27) to the General Assembly, which showcase the excellent work done by the subsidiary bodies. That represents significant progress and I am deeply appreciative of the efforts involved in getting to this point.

We can draw some relevant lessons from the past year. The first is how critically important and effective the CD's six Presidents can be if they work as a team. Secondly, we saw how central continued regular interactions in the Conference are to the broader disarmament universe, whether in safeguarding non-proliferation, improving transparency or building confidence. Thirdly, we learned how crucial it is to not overly politicize the proceedings of the Conference. Its success depends on remaining a place where multilateral negotiations can take place in a serene and professional atmosphere.

Looking ahead, I am cautiously optimistic about the chances for further progress. It will be key for the 2019 session to continue with its subsidiary bodies. Ultimately and hopefully, we can thereby pave the way for the resumption of disarmament negotiations in the CD. It is really past time to do so.

The fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament would be the appropriate forum to take more far-reaching decisions on the status and functions of United Nations disarmament organs. Pending that step, there are measures that we can take to use existing institutions more effectively, regularly and, ultimately, more successfully. In that connection, I would suggest, specifically, improving coordination and synergies among disarmament organs, including closer integration of the Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters into deliberative processes and negotiations; reducing redundancies in deliberations by clarifying responsibilities; improving our use of available expertise; strengthening information flows; and, finally, achieving more equitable representation.

I would like to mention the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR), to which the High Representative referred a couple of times in her statement. UNIDIR's mandate, expertise and autonomy make it a vital source of knowledge and ideas. I am convinced that it could play a more

strategic role in facilitating dialogue and supporting the disarmament process in both New York and Geneva. I urge Member States to give serious consideration to the recommendations requested of the Secretary-General on a sustainable foundation for UNIDIR. The Institute's new Director, Ms. Renata Dwan, who is with us today, will elaborate on three measures that I see as critical in retooling disarmament, namely, achieving the full and equal participation of women, deepening our engagement with the private sector and better integrating civil society.

Once negotiated, disarmament agreements require nurturing. They require States to dedicate time and resources commensurate with the decisions that they have taken. Today, however, the financial situation of many disarmament conventions is a matter of serious concern. States parties pay either very late or not at all. In Geneva, we support and service the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction; the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction; the Convention on Cluster Munitions; and the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects.

For each of those agreements, States have taken on serious and important obligations. One important element is ensuring that funds are available for meetings to take place and for implementation support structures to be maintained. The Organization cannot accept liability for supporting those bodies without adequate remittances in response to annual assessments. That impairs our services to States and planned activities cannot be implemented in full. We have raised the issue repeatedly with States parties over the years, to date with insufficient results. As a result, we urgently need to find solutions and we are working closely with the respective Chairs in Geneva to do that.

One idea is to create economies of scale, which would diminish the need for payments, by merging some of the secretariats of the disarmament conventions. Other conventions — the common secretariat on hazardous chemicals and waste conventions, for example — have done just that with great success.

I mentioned earlier that the challenges of the new century were outpacing institutions created in the previous one. Nowhere is that divide more obvious than in how we manage new technologies. The promise of technology is boundless. Tackling climate change, boosting growth, curing deadly diseases — none of that is conceivable without technology, which can turbocharge our implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Viewed through a security lens, however, there are plenty of reasons to be cautious. Developments in science and technology need to be coupled with incentives to ensure that innovation is responsible, accountable and transparent, because if the promise of technology is boundless, its dystopian downside is just as great. We face a new arms race in an entirely new battlefield — cyberspace. Our legal, humanitarian and ethical norms face unprecedented challenges. Some of the fundamental questions that often get overlooked are whether we will succeed in humanizing technology rather than technologizing humankind, and whether technology will be used responsibly or in ways that will bring unspeakable harm. Much of that depends on multilateral efforts and the United Nations is a neutral table for all stakeholders to come together and agree on a way forward towards a technological future that is safe and beneficial for all.

The Conference on Disarmament is increasingly debating those issues but they transcend institutions. They require more, and perhaps unexpected, partnerships and a new mindset of creativity, innovation and interdisciplinarity. They require us to break down silos. As clearly stated in the Secretary-General's Agenda, disarmament needs to be positioned in a broader context as part and parcel of parallel efforts in development, health, migration and countless other fields.

That brings me to Geneva, the operational centre of the multilateral system. In helping to implement the 2030 Agenda, we have opened new pathways of collaboration across disciplines and developed a new way of doing business that is also infusing our disarmament work, because retooling disarmament is about structural reform and a change in mindset. Geneva is the ideal place to progress on both — not only because of its unique ecosystem of actors spanning international organizations, the private sector and non-governmental organizations that covers the entire disarmament spectrum, but equally importantly

because of its historical legacy as the world's oldest hub for disarmament negotiations, dating back almost 100 years. From the world's first disarmament conference under the League of Nations all the way to the establishment of today's Conference on Disarmament six decades later, Geneva has always been the natural home for disarmament.

We have the means and we may again have the necessary momentum to make real progress in global disarmament. The United Nations Secretariat is ready to play its part, in New York and in Geneva. But we can only hope for success if Member States are ready to take bold, courageous action towards reinvigorating our collective efforts.

**The Acting Chair:** I thank Mr. Møller for his statement.

I now give the floor to the Permanent Observer of the International Committee of the Red Cross to the United Nations.

**Mr. Mardini** (International Committee of the Red Cross): I am honoured to address the First Committee today to share the perspective of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), an independent, neutral, impartial organization that works in more than 80 countries to protect and assist victims of war and other situations of violence, and to promote respect for international humanitarian law.

My focus today will be on the link between disarmament and humanitarian principles. Armed conflict is changing. It is now more protracted, deadly, fragmented and urbanized than ever before. Nowhere are those trends more relevant today than in the conflicts raging in the Middle East region, which I oversaw during the past six years in my post at the ICRC.

The evolving global environment poses profound challenges for civilians, belligerents and humanitarians, but the changing environment makes respect for such laws more important. Those rules, often enshrined in customary law and inspired by public conscience, impose constraints on the development and use of means and methods of warfare. They protect civilians from indiscriminate effects and combatants from unnecessary suffering.

As humanitarian actors, we must also deal with the new challenges while remaining faithful to the humanitarian principles of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement — humanity, neutrality,

impartiality and independence. Throughout its history of humanitarian practice for more than 150 years, the ICRC has witnessed first hand the unacceptably high human cost of certain weapons. In response, we have called for the development of new rules to prohibit or restrict the use of those weapons.

We know that disarmament is firmly rooted in humanitarian rules and principles and that it can save lives. I want to touch upon three areas of concern — first, the use of heavy explosive weapons in densely populated urban areas; secondly, landmines and explosive remnants of war, that is, weapons that continue to harm and kill long after active hostilities have ended; and thirdly, the widespread and poorly controlled availability of conventional arms fed by irresponsible arms transfers, thereby facilitating serious violations of international humanitarian law and human rights and fuelling conflict and violence.

With regard to explosive weapons in populated areas, since 2011, the ICRC has been calling on States and parties to armed conflicts to avoid the use of explosive weapons with a wide impact area in densely populated areas due to the high likelihood of indiscriminate effects in such environments. Those weapons were designed for open battlefields and are inappropriate for populated environments, where they can have a devastating impact on civilians. Over the past decades, the ICRC has witnessed a pattern of significant direct and indirect civilian harm from the use of those weapons in places such as Gaza, Iraq, Syria, Libya, Yemen, Ukraine, Sri Lanka and Afghanistan, and the list goes on.

Heavy explosive weapons not only kill or maim those in the weapons' immediate impact zone, but they can have significant and often long-term and direct effects that ultimately affect a much larger part of the population, especially when critical civilian infrastructure is disabled. For example, when a power plant is incidentally damaged or destroyed, a power failure results. That triggers deadly domino effects on services that are essential to the survival of the civilian population. Electrical power-cut failures affect the ability of hospitals to provide emergency and primary health care. Patients die and people suffer. Without power, water purification and distribution systems no longer function, leading to water shortage. Eventually diseases spread and there are further deaths. When armed conflict is prolonged, services are often damaged

beyond repair, making life for civilians in the affected area impossible, which leads to displacement.

That is the daily and deadly reality for thousands of civilians in urban conflicts in the Middle East and elsewhere. They are forced to bear the tragic cost of means and methods of warfare that are not adapted to densely populated environments. The consequences of the use of heavy explosive weapons are devastating. In Yemen, for instance, critical infrastructure has been repeatedly attacked and destroyed, disrupting the delivery of essential services to people. The health-care system is collapsing and an unprecedented cholera epidemic has broken out. Those effects are foreseeable and preventable, and warring sides must adapt their policies and practices regarding their choices of weapons in populated areas to minimize civilian harm. The ICRC continues to engage States and non-State armed groups for that very purpose.

On weapons that keep on killing, landmines, unexploded cluster munitions and other explosive remnants of war kill and injure many thousands of civilians every year, both during active hostilities and long after they have ended. While significant progress has been made since the adoption of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction and the Convention on Cluster Munitions, challenges persist. Large areas of the world remain contaminated by anti-personnel mines and explosive remnants, posing a daily threat to civilians, hampering agriculture, trade and development and hindering humanitarian operations.

For instance, in eastern Ukraine, particularly in rural areas, the presence of mines impedes everyday activities, such as travelling by road, herding animals, working in the fields, farming and collecting firewood or crossing checkpoints on the line of contact. Explosive remnants of war, particularly as a result of the use of explosive weapons in populated areas, pose the greatest threat to civilians today, especially in protracted conflicts. A rocket that misses the target and fails to explode, landing in front of a medical facility, will deprive hundreds of civilians from access to life-saving health care. An unexploded rocket that has landed in front of a damaged power plant will block access for technical personnel able to repair the damaged infrastructure or it may explode after the end of hostilities, killing or injuring the children playing next to it.

With all those weapons, contamination is fast and clearance is very slow and extremely costly. Every year Red Cross and Red Crescent societies and other organizations continue to treat thousands of new victims of landmines, cluster munitions and explosive remnants of war. According to the Landmine Monitor, the vast majority — more than 75 per cent — of those victims are civilians, including children. For cluster munitions, that statistic rises sharply to 99 per cent, as the Cluster Munition Monitor attests. The ICRC undertakes specific initiatives to prevent and address the effects of mines, cluster munitions and explosive remnants of war, including awareness-raising, physical rehabilitation and support for the social and economic inclusion of survivors. The Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, the Convention on Cluster Munitions and the Protocol on Explosive Remnants of War explicitly establish the collective responsibility of States to provide assistance to the victims of weapons that continue to kill. All stakeholders must do more to protect civilians and their communities from the indiscriminate harm caused by those weapons. Their very presence is today a major obstacle to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Last but not least, with respect to arms availability and irresponsible arms transfers, violence and conflicts are fuelled by a steady supply of arms and ammunition, which almost always makes things worse. Irresponsible arms transfers can result in weapons, directly or by deviation, falling into the wrong hands. When conventional arms are poorly regulated and widely available, the humanitarian consequences are grim. As we witnessed in many regions of the world, the result is tremendous human suffering, the perpetuation of conflict and local, regional and global insecurity. In most of the countries where the ICRC works, be it in the Central African Republic, Yemen, Syria or in Latin America, we continue to witness at first hand the terrible consequences.

Armed suppliers have a duty to consider the risk of the weapons they provide being used to commit or to facilitate serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law. In fact, all States along the arms transfer chain have a vital role to play in preventing the devastating and irreparable harm that comes when weapons fall into the wrong hands by upholding international humanitarian law and acting responsibly at every step. That duty is enshrined in common article 1 to the Geneva Conventions and in the

principles of the Arms Trade Treaty. The Treaty, whose very purpose is to prioritize humanitarian interests and, in doing so, to reduce human suffering will be effective only if it is applied in good faith, consistently, without bias or discrimination and at all levels of the decision-making process, including at the top. States supporting parties to the conflict have a legal and moral responsibility to ensure respect for international humanitarian law. They must use their influence and leverage on parties to the conflict to make them improve their behaviour and respect international humanitarian law. Simply put, there should be no support without compliance. There should be no support to warring sides if they do not respect the laws of war. That simple condition will save lives.

Allow me to conclude with the words of Peter Maurer, President of the ICRC, which summarize the relationship between disarmament and humanitarian principles:

“When there is humanity in war and respect for international humanitarian law, there is a better chance for peace”.

**The Acting Chair:** I thank Mr. Mardini for his statement.

I now give the floor to the Officer in Charge of the Peacebuilding Support Office to make a presentation on behalf of the Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support, Mr. Oscar Fernandez-Taranco.

**Mr. Franche** (Peacebuilding Support Office): I am very happy to say a few words on behalf of the Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support, especially on the links between disarmament and sustaining peace efforts. That is particularly relevant to us given the increased responsibilities of the Peacebuilding Support Office under the proposed peace and security reforms to support integration across pillars, which the Secretary-General refers to as a stronger hinge function.

Sustaining peace and disarmament are fundamentally linked. Armed conflict is the predominant form of violent conflict and, unfortunately, violent conflicts are now on the rise. The number of major violent conflicts has tripled since 2010. In 2016, more countries were affected by violent conflict than at any time in the past 30 years, with unacceptable consequences for civilians, causing record levels of forcibly displaced people and humanitarian needs. Disarmament, demobilization and

reintegration of former combatants have also been at the core of peacebuilding and remain a critical element for the implementation of many peace agreements.

The sequence approach was working well, especially immediately after the Cold War, when rebel groups typically fought Government forces for political power. But, as my colleague from the International Committee of the Red Cross just mentioned, the violent conflicts of today are far more complex, with many more non-State actors, multidimensional drivers and layers of external and international factors. The changing nature of conflict has made peacebuilding and sustaining peace even more pressing and important. Sustaining peace was introduced by the twin resolution of the 2015 review of the United Nations peacebuilding architecture, simultaneously adopted by the General Assembly, as resolution 70/262, and the Security Council, as resolution 2282 (2016), in April 2016. The central elements of sustaining peace are the need for coherent, comprehensive approaches across the United Nations system and throughout the conflict cycle — before, during and after — in close partnership with regional actors, civil society and the private sector but in support of national Governments and through inclusive political processes. Sustaining peace and disarmament are intertwined with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which is the overarching framework for the work of the United Nations in support of Member States.

As noted in the report of the Secretary-General on peacebuilding and sustaining peace (A/72/707), the cost of crises is increasingly onerous and unsustainable. The international community spent \$233 billion over the past 10 years on humanitarian responses, United Nations peacekeeping and host-country refugee support. Prevention saves lives and resources. It is not only the right thing to do but it is cost-effective. As the recent United Nations-World Bank joint study *Pathways for Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict* states, effective prevention could save anywhere between \$5 billion and \$70 billion per year for affected countries and the international community combined.

Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is the world's best defence against violent conflict and instability, as progress towards the SDGs goes hand in hand with sustaining peace. Development actors have an important role to play in sustaining peace, as the quadrennial comprehensive policy review

of operational activities for development of the United Nations system also recognizes. That is partly because many drivers of violent conflict are in areas that the SDGs can address. The opportunities for synergies between sustaining peace and sustainable development are significant.

Disarmament is also a critical aspect of prevention, contributing to the 2030 Agenda, which refers to safe habitats, safe public spaces and safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all. SDG 16 is most closely associated with sustaining peace. It aims to promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels. Moreover, target 16.4 directly aims to significantly reduce illicit arms flows by 2030. It is important to note that, in that context, the United Nations does not have sufficient resources to support Member States in preventing violent conflicts and many initiatives to advance the SDGs face finance gaps. That is why the Peacebuilding Fund, as the Secretary-General's instrument of first resort to sustain peace, offers a timely, catalytic and risk-tolerant instrument and is a critical vehicle for building resilience and driving integrated United Nations action towards prevention and sustaining peace.

The Peacebuilding Fund has supported national partners and United Nations country teams in responding strategically to peacebuilding and development needs, including disarmament. Since its inception, the Peacebuilding Fund has provided more than \$40 million towards disarmament, demobilization and reintegration activities in at least 10 different countries. The role of the Fund as a financial catalyst to support disarmament activities for peacebuilding and sustaining peace must therefore be further enhanced. In the light of that need, the Secretary-General has recently encouraged Member States in his report on peacebuilding and sustaining peace to explore innovative ways to finance United Nations peacebuilding activities, including through the issuance of social impact bonds in peacebuilding, the voluntary implementation of a tax on the arms trade or the imposition of fines on defence industry corporations convicted of corruption.

The Peacebuilding Fund is also now discussing with the Office for Disarmament Affairs the launch of a new window devoted to small arms and light weapons reduction, entitled "Saving Lives Entity", in line with the Secretary-General's objective to increase coherence

and coordination among the various peacebuilding-related trust funds. That new window will become operational if and when it receives the necessary support and additional resources to be able to support such an initiative.

Finally, I would like to mention the important role of women in peacebuilding. Many countries have now developed and adopted national action plans for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security. As of September 2018, 79 Member States had adopted a national action plan in support of the resolution and 22 of them — 29 per cent — include references to incorporating a gender perspective into arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation and providing specific actions to disarm society and to control the trade in small arms.

**The Acting Chair:** I thank Mr. Franche for his statement.

I now give the floor to the Executive Director of the High-level Panel on Digital Cooperation.

**Mr. Gill (High-level Panel on Digital Cooperation):** It is an honour to address the First Committee on behalf of the Secretary-General's High-level Panel on Digital Cooperation. It is a pleasure to see so many friends and comrades in the area of disarmament in the room.

Digital technologies cut uniquely across subject domains, policy domains and international borders. Cooperation across those domains and across borders is crucial to realizing their full social and economic potential and to mitigating the risks that they could pose. Furthermore, such technologies generate unprecedented value in the private sector. They thread through supply chains in unique ways and modify supply and manufacturing chains in ways that are unprecedented. Working with digital technologies requires working with the private sector and that is an essential feature of building international cooperation in the digital domain.

After a long period of reflection and a series of consultations over the past year, the Secretary-General decided to set up the High-level Panel in July this year and tasked it with advancing proposals to strengthen cooperation in the digital space among Governments, the private sector, civil society, international organizations, academia, the technical community and other relevant stakeholders. The Panel aims to contribute to the

broader global dialogue on how interdisciplinary and cooperative approaches can help to ensure a safe and inclusive future for all. The emphasis in the Panel's work is on function and modalities — the how of digital cooperation and not just the form or outcome, or the what, of processes — whereby stakeholders work to maximize the benefits of digital technologies, while safeguarding against potential risks. The Panel is co-chaired by Melinda Gates and Jack Ma. That is also a unique feature of the Panel, given previous similar initiatives. It is comprised of 20 independent experts, five of whom are under the age of 35. There are 11 women and 11 men. That representation reflects a careful regional balance, professional diversity and diverse sectors, such as Government, business, academia, civil society and the technological community.

The first in-person meeting of the Panel took place here in New York on 24 and 25 September during the high-level segment. The Panel is expected to issue a report with recommendations in late spring 2019. At the conclusion of the first meeting in New York, the Panel members agreed to focus on three pillars. The first is values and principles. What values and principles should underpin digital cooperation and how can we embed them in policy and business? The second is methods and mechanisms. How can stakeholders cooperate more effectively in the digital realm, including how can we get marginalized stakeholders to speak up and be heard? Thirdly, what are the priority action areas for the international community and how can cooperation among stakeholders be improved in areas such as capacity-building, closing the digital gap, inclusive participation in the digital economy, data, human rights and human agency and, lastly, of direct interest to the First Committee, digital trust and security.

In the coming months, the Panel will pursue its deliberations in small groups that meet virtually on a regular basis. To inform deliberations, a wide-ranging consultation process has been launched, which includes an open call for input that has gone live on the Panel's website, with a deadline of 30 November. The Panel will meet again in situ in Geneva in late January 2019 to take stock of the research and engagement and begin to draft its report.

I would like to turn now to a few questions that could be of immediate relevance to the Committee's deliberations. First, I have already underlined that the erosion of trust, whether it is across borders or virtually between companies and customers, is an important

contextual factor that has led to the establishment of the Panel. It is no coincidence that the Secretary-General started his speech to the General Assembly this year by talking about trust deficit disorder (see A/73/PV.6). When we think of digital technologies, trust in protocols of communication and computing, data and standards has been key in developing the myriad applications of those technologies and recent developments have challenged that trust. How then can we prevent the further erosion of trust and enhance cooperation? What values and principles can sustain such cooperation, without which the work of the Committee would be more challenging to achieve? To cite just one example, if we end up fragmenting the Internet, the simple task of ensuring cybersecurity by various jurisdictions would become much more complicated.

Secondly, digital technologies, which have many applications in the civilian domain, can enable and amplify existing weapons capabilities in new ways and even create new capabilities that worsen existing security dilemmas and complicate disarmament and arms-control efforts. What methods and mechanisms can be thought of to convey assurance, prevent misperceptions and build mutual confidence?

Finally, in the context of an agenda item that has been on the Committee's agenda for the past 20 years, how can possible top-down approaches to digital security and stability — the Group of Governmental Experts on Developments in the Field of Information and Telecommunications in the Context of International Security, for example — be integrated with industry-led or regionally coordinated bottom-up approaches to manage digital security risks? What is the role of multilateral forums in that regard and how can stakeholders, other than Governments, be better engaged in those efforts?

One of the challenges for the Panel and other initiatives in the digital realm is the different understandings about the impact of the technologies. An effort to build a common vocabulary on threats, possible responses to those threats and opportunities and possible ways of maximizing them is essential to building common understandings — a term that occurs repeatedly in the text of the resolution under the agenda item to which I referred previously.

The overriding strategic objective of building trust, common understandings and international cooperation in the digital domain is of value to the Committee. I

look forward to hearing suggestions and comments on how the Panel can better strengthen that interface.

**The Acting Chair:** I now give the floor to Ms. Dwan.

**Ms. Dwan** (United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research): It is a pleasure to be with the members of the First Committee again today.

I am very conscious of the fact that members have now sat through five excellent presentations and that they have a busy agenda before them, so I will be brief. I will just pose a few questions and share some perspectives with regard to one dimension of the Secretary-General's *Securing Our Common Future: An Agenda for Disarmament*, and that is the reference to and the call for partnerships in the area of disarmament. The Secretary-General devotes a full chapter — the final one — to it in his *Agenda*.

To some extent, partnerships are not new to the disarmament and arms-control community. The relationship between technical, expert and academic engagement and the community has always been part and parcel of the Committee's work. Groups such as Pugwash and International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War have a long standing. However, I think we are at a juncture today in our political and governance systems, as well as in the science and technological developments to which Ambassador Gill just referred, that presents new challenges for working together and thinking about how we will engage together with the full diversity of non-State actors.

I note, not without a degree of irony, that such groups are lumped together in the last chapter of the *Agenda for Disarmament*. We have regional organizations, youth, women, civil society and the private sector. There are, of course, a vast and varied set of groups, each with great divisions and diversity within and across them. I believe it is important for us, going forward, to think about how to unpack those groups. How do we understand the interaction between intergovernmental processes and those key partnerships?

By way of introduction, let me offer a couple of thoughts on how we might think about the roles of partnerships and what we understand those roles to be.

The first role is that of catalysts. For example, how much of the work of groups or organizations is conducted outside intergovernmental processes and provides us with new ways of thinking or engaging?

The second role is that of advocacy or, perhaps, mobilization. They are separate terms but interlinked. If we think about the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Treaty or the Convention on Cluster Munitions, we can really see the role played by civil society in championing, advocating and mobilizing and the catalytic and force-multiplier effect it can have on progress on disarmament.

Another role is that of offering new ideas on the substance, as well as on the process, of addressing the challenges to arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament. I think Mr. Gill referred to the various challenges posed by new technologies. Where will we be having the conversation on the issues to be addressed and how we might think about addressing them?

The fourth distinct role to be played by partnerships is that of facilitating ideas about scenario development and the assessment of new and long-standing risks. For example, if we want to consider the issue of hypersonic missiles, we need to engage with the private sector and defence manufacturers. We also need to understand and engage with aeronautical industry experts and scientists. Therefore, we must also think about how to think in order to engage with partners. I found that when we had the Geneva Dialogues on Securing our Common Future: Taking forward the Secretary-General's *Agenda for Disarmament*, together with the Office for Disarmament Affairs and all our civil society and expert partners, over the summer, one of the most interesting statements came from one of the youngest people in the room — Ronit Langer, a student at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, who had participated in the 2017 Meeting of States Parties to the Biological Weapons Convention. She studies synthetic biology. She said:

“It is good that you are here talking about these things, but 95 per cent of what you are talking about is past technology. I am concerned about what is coming and I do not know if this room is prepared for that.”

Perhaps just thinking about how to address or set our agendas is the final role of partnerships, from which we could benefit.

I would like to offer a few examples of how that has taken place with three partnership groups — women, civil society actors and the private sector.

The Secretary-General's *Agenda for Disarmament* is very strong on the role of gender and the contribution that a gender-based perspective can bring to disarmament. He notes that action plans call for the full and equal participation of women in all decision-making processes. He also makes a commitment to working to achieve gender parity on all panels and boards. As a woman, I have to say that, while I greatly welcome that, it is but the first step. It is a necessary but not sufficient step to achieving real progress on bringing a gender perspective into disarmament.

Quite often, when people inquire about the gender perspective to disarmament, there is a perception that it is about women at the table, but a truly gender-responsive disarmament will look different and have different processes. For example, the reference to gender-based violence in the Arms Trade Treaty, which we recently initiated in part due to cooperation between Member States and civil society groups, brings a new dimension to what we think is an arms-control problem and to what we think is action and a response in that area. When we think about women and the role they play in reducing community violence, particularly when we recognize and grapple every day in the field with the limitations in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration as a concept and a tool, offering new perspectives of looking at community and family orientation is becoming one of the new areas of engagement. It is not just about women being at the table; it is about changing the kind of issues we want to debate and the answers and responses we might think of putting forward.

I think that good progress is already being made in that area and I hope that it will be reflected in the Secretary-General's implementation plan. I would like to draw attention in particular to Canada's efforts to incorporate the gender perspective, resolution by resolution, make it concrete and ensure that, as I like to say, gender is more than a paragraph in statements. The International Gender Champions Disarmament Impact Group, launched by Namibia, Ireland, Women at the Table and the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, is another of our attempts to unpack the issue in a very specific and concrete way.

Another area I would like to highlight is the role of civil society. I do not think Committee members need me to tell them about that; civil society can probably do a better job in that regard, but what I would argue is that advocacy and mobilization play a critical role in the implementation of any effective arms control tools

and arrangements. If we look at some of the drivers of action today with respect to conventional weapons and nuclear disarmament, it is civil society, in particular young people. The question is: how do we bring them into the science and technology discussions and how can we benefit from their knowledge and learning?

Regarding private-sector partners, I would like to reiterate the view, already expressed by Mr. Gill, that it is not simply a matter of their participation; it is actually about looking to them for some of the scenarios and definitions of the issues we need to address and for some of the consideration of new ways of thinking about regulation, whether in terms of industry standards or transparency arrangements, and new ways of thinking about grappling with those new problems.

One area in which there is more work to be done in taking forward the Secretary-General's *Agenda for Disarmament* is the question of how we do so. We have talked for many years about partnerships, but to date we have made relatively limited progress in thinking about how to implement the Secretary-General's call to achieve greater integration of experts, industry and civil society representatives into the meetings of all United Nations disarmament bodies. One way forward might be to think about the various moments and phases in which we need to engage partners.

One could frame that question in different ways. There is the information stage. What do the intergovernmental bodies need when they begin to think about and discuss an issue? What knowledge and information are needed? Another stage that is critical for partnerships is what I would call the problem-framing stage. How do we identify the problem we are seeking to address? In the work of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research on lethal autonomous weapons systems, for example, the role of our primers is basically to try to distil a lot of the research available into clear statements of the issues on the table — not to take those decisions or even offer ideas as solutions to them, but to help Member States in the framing phase. What is likely to remain an intergovernmental State process is the decision-making stage; this is an intergovernmental forum and the decision-making will therefore remain in this sphere. But on the other side of the equation — the communication, implementation, monitoring and evaluation stages — we desperately need the participation of partnerships.

The Director-General has called for new ways of thinking about how we engage with partnerships in the different phases. I would put it to the Committee that while we have grappled with some of the issues, including by holding annual dialogues with civil society and holding engagements with industry on an invitational basis, we may want to think about holding concentric dialogues and new forms of engagement in our processes at the information and problem-framing stages, as well as in the communication, implementation, monitoring and evaluation stages.

Mr. Gill raised the question of groups of governmental experts and whether their work could be informed by and engage with groups of non-governmental experts, and where and how we might establish a more sustained engagement with industry expert groups. Some of these issues must evolve dynamically on a case-by-case basis, but we may also need to think about how to create a more sustained dialogue through annual workshops or quarterly engagements and by utilizing new technology. I hope that over the course of implementation of the Secretary-General's plan as described by Mrs. Nakamitsu today, we may put more flesh on the bones of that particular action. Perhaps that would be a new area for an active debate in Geneva over the course of the next year.

**The Acting Chair:** I now give the floor to Mr. De Macedo Soares.

**Mr. De Macedo Soares** (Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean) (*spoke in Spanish*): The best way to present the vision of the States members of the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (OPANAL) on the current situation of disarmament and the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons is to refer to the consensual statements that they issue regularly, the most recent of which was the declaration issued by its 33 member States on the occasion of the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons on 26 September.

In this brief statement, I would like to make a few points to describe the current situation. Fortunately, there are a few positive points, but I am afraid that the negative ones predominate.

First, we do not know at present whether there has been a reduction in nuclear arsenals, which still include more than 14,465 warheads, some 3,750 of which are deployed, according to reliable sources.

Second, each of those States that possess the most powerful nuclear arsenals have, on several occasions this year, reaffirmed the role of nuclear weapons in their strategies. In some cases, they have done so while introducing troubling innovations and setting forth new hypotheses for the use of those weapons.

Third, in addition to strategic statements that envisage an even more important role for nuclear weapons, nuclear-weapon-States are engaging in new controversies and disagreements among themselves. The international community can only view this as a deterioration in security conditions and an increased threat of conflict, as mentioned by Mrs. Nakamitsu.

Fourth, we are now in the second year of the review cycle of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), but regrettably we cannot say that the second session of the Preparatory Committee for the tenth NPT Review Conference was successful, not only because of the gaps that exist between the positions held but also because to date there have been no positive indications for a successful outcome of the Conference.

Fifth, the immediate challenge will be to achieve a greater convergence of positions at the third session of the Preparatory Committee, to be held in 2019. Almost all United Nations Member States are aware, especially at present, of the absolute need to ensure the success of the next NPT Review Conference.

Sixth, a large majority of United Nations Member States maintain their position against nuclear weapons, which has been reaffirmed in both political and legal terms. In that regard there is no doubt that further progress can be expected.

Seventh, since the General Assembly's proclamation of 26 September as the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons, that Day is being commemorated worldwide every year. Here, at United Nations Headquarters, this year once again a special meeting was held, which lasted a whole day, with interventions by many high-level representatives of United Nations Member States. This is a substantive event and not merely a formal commemoration.

Eighth, the resumption of contacts regarding nuclear weapons on the Korean peninsula and the initiation of a number of concrete measures, with the prospect of a continuing dialogue, offers the hope that that element of instability may be dismantled, which has not only a regional but also a global significance.

Those recent ambitious events allow us to envisage the possibility of establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone on the Korean peninsula or in North-East Asia.

Ninth, the five nuclear-weapon-free zones of Latin America and the Caribbean, the South Pacific, South-East Asia, Africa and Central Asia, in addition to Mongolia, remain in effect and have maintained their legal and political status. The 117 countries involved are initiating preparations for the fourth conference on nuclear-weapon-free zones in 2020 to continue the cycle begun in 2005.

Tenth, a few months ago, a very positive initiative was taken by Secretary-General Guterres, who presented his *Securing Our Common Future: An Agenda for Disarmament* initiative at a crucial moment to help guide the discussions and actions of the international community. My colleagues on the panel have made much mention of that initiative.

Finally, I will make a few brief remarks on the contributions of the nuclear-weapon-free zones. They are a creation of international law, as embodied in the Treaty of Tlatelolco of 1967, which represented the first step towards resolving the problem of nuclear weapons since the issue was identified by the General Assembly in the first resolution of its first session. Other steps followed, beginning with the NPT. The first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, held in 1978, continues to exert a key influence on international relations. Further important progress followed, such as the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and, more recently, the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. Nor should we omit to mention the contributions made by bilateral agreements and the unilateral initiatives of nuclear-weapon States. However, the recognition of the value of all those steps should not induce us to adopt a step-by-step policy forever. OPANAL not only safeguards the nuclear-weapon-free zone in Latin America and the Caribbean but also acts as an instrument through which its member States can submit joint positions to international bodies and other relevant forums.

**The Acting Chair:** In keeping with the established practice of the Committee, I will now suspend the meeting to afford delegations an opportunity to hold an interactive discussion with our panellists through an informal question-and-answer session.

*The meeting was suspended at 4.25 p.m. and resumed at 5.30 p.m.*

**The Acting Chair:** Before giving the floor to the speaker in exercise of the right of reply, I would like to remind delegations that statements in that regard are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and five minutes for the second.

**Mr. Al-Khalifa** (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): I have asked to speak in right of reply to the statement made by the representative of the Syrian regime, who levelled unfounded accusations against my country in the general debate. We utterly reject those false accusations. It is not unlikely that the representative of the Syrian regime levels such accusations to cover up the acts of the regime that he represents, including the use of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) against unarmed civilians in Syria. That use is rejected by the international community and considered to be among the most horrible crimes under international law, and amounts to a war crime and a crime against humanity. It also undermines the non-proliferation regime that the international community has developed and preserved for decades.

Many international reports have documented the use of WMDs, including the reports of the Joint Investigative Mechanism of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, the United Nations and the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic. They have confirmed that the forces of that regime have used chemical weapons against civilians. Other parties have also confirmed its use of WMDs. The BBC recently issued a report concerning investigations into the use by the Syrian regime of chemical weapons in many places, especially in Idlib and Hama. That is in addition to the regime's years-long record of war crimes and crimes against humanity, which is the reason behind its efforts to distract the international community and blame other countries for its crimes, although those countries have opted to defend the Syrian people in accordance with international law.

The submission of several letters to the United Nations forecasting attacks with chemical weapons and scenarios related to those attacks is proof of prior knowledge of the use of WMDs and represents an attempt to level accusations concerning their use against countries that reject Syria's gross violations of international law and human rights.

It is also ironic that the representatives of that regime repeatedly make statements about the danger

of terrorism, whereas its irresponsible policies have led to the emergence of terrorist groups as never before. The State of Qatar, on the contrary, has a clean record in that regard, as witnessed and commended by the international community, especially with regard to fighting terrorism.

**Mr. Hallak** (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): As is the case when the Israeli position is weak and fragile, we witness its representatives distorting facts and turning them upside down in an attempt to shirk responsibility for the crimes and aggressions committed by the Israeli entity and to distract us from the facts, realities and various resolutions adopted against that entity at the United Nations and other international organizations.

One source of concern on which there is a consensus among most States of the world is the situation in the Middle East, in particular and most urgently regarding the Israeli entity's possession of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons and their delivery systems, which are capable of reaching more than 5,000 kilometres. The question now is: which countries are being considered as possible targets at such a distance?

The representative of the Israeli entity made a statement this morning (see A/C.1/73/PV.9) that was full of lies and false accusations levelled at other States with a view to distracting us from the threats of Israel's nuclear weapons and its disregard of international resolutions, including those of the Security Council, calling on that entity to accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and to subject its nuclear facilities and activities to the safeguards of the International Atomic Energy Agency. In addition, that entity refuses to accede to any conventions on weapons of mass destruction, whether chemical or biological.

With regard to the statement made by the representative of the Sheikdom of Qatar, I would like to remind him of what was said by Mohammed Al-Misfir, a Qatari citizen who is very closely tied to the Sheikdom of Qatar and is considered to be their media expert. On official Qatar TV and at about this time last year, he stated that they were prepared to use chemical weapons to curb the insurgency of tribal gatherings in Qatar. That was an official threat by someone close to the Sheikdom of Qatar concerning the use of chemical weapons against the people of Qatar.

Unfortunately, we have seen no reaction to that statement on the part of the Organization for the

Prohibition of Chemical Weapons or the Security Council, and we are all aware of the powers that have prevented any reaction to that threat of the use of chemical weapons. In contradiction of what was stated by the representative of the Sheikhdom of Qatar, I would also remind him of an article based on TV interviews that is available to anyone who is interested, in which the former Prime Minister of the Sheikhdom of Qatar stated that “in cooperation with Saudi Arabia, we have spent more than \$137 billion”. That enormous figure of \$137 billion is, of course, in support of terrorist groups. That is what he said.

Just a short while ago, the representative of the Sheikhdom of Qatar mentioned that his country had a full record of combating terrorism. That is completely false. Those who are closest to the Sheikhdom of Qatar have called on it in public, on television and in formal statements to stop financing terrorist groups, in particular Al-Qaida and its affiliate, the Al-Nusra Front in Syria. One day, we sent a letter containing the name and the cell phone number of an official Qatari security officer, along with a recording in which he is heard asking one of the terrorist groups that were present in southern Syria to kidnap troops of the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force. That is what Qatar does.

Furthermore, I would like to refer to a statement by made Khalid bin Mohamed Al-Attiyah, which appeared in *Le Monde* on 12 May 2015, in response to a question about his Government’s position vis-à-vis Al-Nusra Front, which is affiliated with Al-Qaida, and whether he considered it a terrorist group. Al-Attiyah stated:

“Armed groups are fighting in order to overthrow the regime. Moderate people cannot ask the Al-Nusra Front to stay at home because we do not want to work with you. The conditions on the ground must be taken into consideration and we should be realistic.”

For the Sheikhdom of Qatar, political realism trumps international legitimacy. It violates Security Council resolutions against terrorism and supports the Al-Nusra Front, which has been listed by the Security Council as a terrorist group. That is how the Sheikhdom of Qatar functions; as everyone knows, it supports terrorism everywhere.

**Mr. Ghaniei** (Islamic Republic of Iran): I am taking the floor to exercise my delegation’s right of reply.

There is no limit to the ability of the officials of the Israeli regime to lie and engage in disinformation campaigns against Iran in order to divert attention from the threats emanating from Israel’s destabilizing actions and policies in the Middle East. I categorically reject their allegations.

The Israeli regime’s entire history is filled with major acts of occupation, crimes against humanity and aggression against its neighbours and other countries in the Middle East and beyond, which have been committed at least 15 times since 1948. Furthermore, Israel continues to flout all international regimes governing weapons of mass destruction by refusing to adhere to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction. Israel is the only obstacle to establishing a zone free from weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East and, as the Committee heard just this morning (see A/C.1/73/PV.9), it is not even considering cooperating in multilateral settings for such purposes. Indeed, nuclear weapons in the hands of that regime pose the most serious threat to the security of all States in the Middle East, as well as to the non-proliferation regime.

The representative of the Israeli regime spoke of the need to comply with and respect international law. He did not, however, explain why Israel does not adhere to the relevant treaties and comply with international norms.

With respect to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, while the Security Council endorsed it and has called on all to support that historical achievement of multilateral diplomacy, Israel, as its representative shamelessly boasted this morning, has been against it from the very beginning and has done whatever it could to undermine its successful implementation, in contradiction to a Security Council resolution.

The rogue Israeli regime should also be reminded of its record of arrogantly and flagrantly violating at least 86 resolutions — I repeat, 86 resolutions — adopted by the Security Council from 1948 to 2016 as a result of its acts of aggression and occupation, as well as its well-documented atrocities and war crimes committed against the Palestinian and Lebanese people. A recent example of Israel’s widespread systematic crimes is its outrageous killing of more than 200 innocent

Palestinian civilians and injuring of over 22,000 others since late March in the Gaza Strip. That appalling track record affords no moral standing or credibility to the Israel regime to render judgment about the compliance of others with Security Council resolutions or international law.

**Mr. Al-Khalifa** (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): I do not have to explain the obvious in view of the repeated false allegations that we have heard from the representative of the Syrian regime. Once again, I stress that no matter how many attempts are made by the representatives of that illegitimate regime to distract the international community, it will not change the facts and will not hide the truth.

The provisions of international law and international humanitarian law will be upheld to achieve justice for the war crimes and crimes against humanity that were committed in Syria. The State of Qatar reiterates its position, based on the Charter of the United Nations and international law, in support of the legitimate demands of the Syrian people to self-determination and to a life in freedom and dignity.

**Mr. Hallak** (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): It is ironic that the representative of the Sheikhdom of Qatar is levelling accusations at other States and speaking of war crimes, the implementation of international law and people's rights. I remind him of how the Sheikhdom of Qatar imprisoned a poet who had not even criticized the Sheikhdom but had rather spoken about human rights in general. He did not even speak of that Sheikhdom specifically, yet it sentenced him to life in prison. Those are the human rights that the representative of the Sheikhdom of Qatar is speaking about.

The war crimes committed were paid for by the Sheikhdom of Qatar, as I mentioned a while ago, in

collusion with another regime. They paid more than \$137 billion for the destruction of Syria, and they will be held accountable for those funds because they belong to the Qatari people.

I remind the representative of the Sheikhdom of Qatar that the Syrian people will not forget the crimes that have been committed by Qatar since the beginning of the crisis in Syria in 2011. We will pursue it and hold it accountable. That is what the Syrian people are saying to the Sheikhdom of Qatar, which has been a major source of terrorist financing in my country. It has supported the terrorists and provided them with all types of weaponry. It has used aircraft to transfer groups affiliated with the Al-Qaida organization from southern Yemen to my country. We have the numbers and the dates. We have the information on how they transferred trained combat groups of Al-Qaida. Of course, the regime in Qatar is attempting to compete with others in running Al-Qaida by paying more generously.

That is the Sheikhdom of Qatar. It generously pays those who protect it, and it finances terrorist groups in many countries, in particular in the Syrian Arab Republic.

**The Acting Chair**: We have exhausted the time available for this meeting. I will now give the floor to the Secretary for announcements.

**Ms. Elliott** (Secretary of the Committee): The delegation of the Russian Federation would like to remind delegations of the informal consultations for all Member States on the draft resolution entitled "Developments in the field of information and telecommunications in the context of international security", which will take place tomorrow, at 3 p.m., in conference room 7.

*The meeting rose at 5.55 p.m.*