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First Committee

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Official Records

Chair: Mr. Jinga. (Romania)

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda item 93 to 108 (continued)

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

The Chair (*spoke in French*): The Committee will first hear the remaining speakers under the cluster “Outer space (disarmament aspects)”. Then, time permitting, the Committee will continue its discussion on the cluster “Conventional weapons”.

Mr. Hassan (Egypt): My delegation associates itself with the statements delivered on behalf of the League of Arab States and the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/73/PV.15), as well as with that to be delivered today on behalf of the Group of African States.

Outer space is part of the shared heritage owned equally by all the peoples of the world and a common asset of humankind. All aspects of human activities on Earth today are either directly or indirectly dependent upon outer-space technologies. Taking into consideration the extreme fragility and volatility of the outer-space environment, it must not be allowed to turn into another battlefield or the setting for military conflicts that could have catastrophic implications.

There is a clear need for a legally binding instrument that would complement the existing legal framework by preventing an arms race in outer space and filling

the existing legal gaps in this area, especially taking into consideration the alarming announcements by some States in relation to their plans to weaponize outer space, in addition to the continued development of military capabilities devoted to attacking outer-space assets.

Such a legally binding instrument should be of a comprehensive scope that includes four prohibitions: on the placement of any weapons, defensive or offensive, in outer space; on any armed attacks against satellites or any outer-space assets; on any intentional harmful interference that interrupts the normal functioning of outer-space assets; and on the development, testing and stockpiling of weapons that are specifically designed for the sole purpose of attacking outer-space assets or being deployed or used as a weapon in outer space.

We believe that each of those prohibitions can be subject to reliable verification measures, using a diversified set of tools that could be supplemented by transparency measures, as well as a mechanism for consultations and dispute settlement. We also believe that such an instrument can be designed to avoid any infringement on the full utilization of the peaceful uses of outer space or dual-use technologies by all States for purposes other than weaponization. The required definitions can be easily determined in a manner that would avoid such infringement.

In that context, Egypt warmly welcomes the formation of the Group of Governmental Experts established pursuant to resolution 72/250 and the constructive progress made at its first session, in August 2018, which saw an unprecedented level of

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depth in the substantive discussions concerning all controversial legal and technical aspects, including the applicability of international law and the Charter of the United Nations.

That remarkable progress can be attributed largely to the constructive approach adopted by all the Group's experts as well as the able leadership of its Chair, as well as the professional and dedicated efforts of the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs and the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research. We look forward to the adoption of the Group's final report, which could represent a significant step in international efforts in this area by laying out substantive elements of a possible treaty.

Finally, I would like to highlight that Egypt once more joins Sri Lanka in introducing the annual draft resolution entitled "Prevention of an arms race in outer space". We count on the support of all Member States for that important draft resolution.

Ms. Castro Loredo (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation wishes to align itself with the statement made by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/73/PV.15).

Cuba advocates for the legitimate right of all States to equal and non-discriminatory access to outer space and to benefit from cooperation in the areas of training and the transfer of space applications and technology. Equal access to all such technologies would help Member States achieve the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda, as well as contribute to the prevention and mitigation of natural disasters, to environmental protection and to human health. In that regard, we welcome the adoption at the United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space of new political commitments in keeping with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The exploration and use of outer space, including the Moon and other celestial bodies, must be pursued for the benefit and in the interests of all Member States. In that context, Cuba expresses its concern about the threat of an arms race in outer space, the continued development and improvement of space weapons and the presence of military equipment in outer space. We are also seriously concerned by the use of space technologies to the detriment of the security of nations, including the extensive network of existing spy satellites, which, besides being incompatible with peace

and development, continue to saturate geostationary orbits and generate large quantities of space debris.

In that regard, we reiterate our support for the strengthening of the legal regime governing outer space through the adoption of a multilateral treaty for the prevention and prohibition of the placement of weapons in outer space. In Cuba's view, such an instrument should also prohibit the threat or use of force against satellites or other types of space object.

As we have expressed on previous occasions, the draft treaty submitted by Russia and China at the Conference on Disarmament provides a starting point for negotiations. Cuba welcomes the establishment of a subsidiary body of the Conference on Disarmament on the prevention of an arms race in outer space as well as the beginning of deliberations on the matter in the Disarmament Commission through a working group on transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities with a view to preventing an arms race. We also welcome the consideration of substantive elements of a legally binding international instrument on the prevention of the arms race in outer space under the auspices of the Group of Governmental Experts established by resolution 72/250.

Cuba is steadfastly committed to preventing an arms race in outer space and will therefore continue to support the policy of no first placement of weapons of any kind in outer space. We must also prevent outer space from being turned into a new theatre of military operations: only in that way can we ensure the prudent use of outer space for peaceful purposes and the collective benefit of present and future generations.

Mr. Mahomed (South Africa): South Africa, in various multilateral forums, has already expressed its concern about developments that could prompt a new arms race on Earth and in outer space. We have also cautioned against any action that could lead to the weaponization of outer space. Space is a driver of economic growth and innovation to the benefit of all humankind. Space activities and technologies contribute to tackling global challenges such as climate change, disaster management, food security and the protection of the environment. Space science and technology will also play an important role in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Given that outer space and its exploration for peaceful purposes are playing an ever-increasing role in the development of humankind, the international community has a responsibility to

prevent outer space from becoming a new realm for weapons placement.

South Africa believes that the best way to promote order, safety, security and the sustainability of outer space activities and to preserve outer space as a domain for peaceful activities is through international cooperation and dialogue in which all interested States can participate on an equal basis. Key to such efforts is the extent to which all States are able to gain access to, and benefit from, outer space, regardless of their level of scientific, technical or economic development. A key component of our efforts to sustain outer space for exclusively peaceful purposes is the need to establish measures to ensure that space does not become the next arena for conflict and, consequently, that an arms race in outer space does not become a reality.

South Africa remains supportive of negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament (CD) on a legally binding instrument that would effectively prevent an arms race in outer space. While recognizing the many contributions that have been made to the debate, we particularly appreciate the efforts of China and the Russian Federation, which submitted a concrete proposal for a possible draft treaty on the prevention of the placement of weapons in outer space. However, under the present circumstances, it appears highly unlikely that an agreement could be reached in the CD in the near future. It is therefore important that other avenues for negotiations, such as the General Assembly, also be explored.

While South Africa welcomes the general pledge by States not to allow space to become the next theatre of war and conflict, we believe that a treaty on preventing an arms race in outer space would complement and reaffirm the importance of the 1967 Outer Space Treaty, which aims to preserve space for peaceful uses by prohibiting the use of space weapons and the development of space-weapon technology.

South Africa is therefore pleased to have participated in the first session of the Group of Governmental Experts established by the Secretary-General to consider and make recommendations on substantial elements of an international legally binding instrument on the prevention of an arms race in outer space, including, inter alia, on the prevention of the placement of weapons in outer space. We will continue to support the work of the Group of Governmental Experts and to articulate our position in accordance

with the 2016 African Space Policy and Strategy, which raises awareness of the central role of space science and technology in socioeconomic development. We believe that the benefits of outer space should be accessible to all, and not be confined to only those countries with a space programme.

Mr. Carrillo Gómez (Paraguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): It is my great honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the delegation of the Republic of Paraguay, which reaffirms its commitment to the principles of the peaceful exploration and use of outer space for the benefit of all humankind. Having renounced the use and threat of use of force in our international relations, we advocate for the prevention of an arms race in outer space, including the prohibition, among other things, of the placement of weapons in outer space.

In that regard, we wish to highlight the importance of the Conference on Disarmament considering concrete proposals for transparency and confidence-building measures and other recommendations to prevent an arms race in space. The delegation of Paraguay believes that such confidence-building measures must, among other things, guarantee international responsibility for damage caused by space activities.

The Government of Paraguay ratified the Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies, thereby contributing to its universalization. Through our Space Agency, established in 2017, Paraguay has been proactively working to harness the benefits of the peaceful exploration and use of outer space for all humankind, in particular to achieve sustainable development that leaves no one behind, reduce disaster risks and address the impacts of climate change.

The Paraguayan Space Agency also participates in bilateral and multilateral cooperation initiatives with counterpart entities in other States and with international organizations. In that context, Paraguay has requested admission as a member of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space. All countries, regardless of their level of economic or scientific development, should be able to participate in, contribute to and benefit from the exploration and use of outer space for peaceful purposes. In that context, we must be mindful of the needs of developing countries, especially in terms of building their capacities to explore and use outer space for peaceful purposes on an equal footing

and in a non-discriminatory way, in accordance with international law.

We therefore encourage the delegations of all Member States to work together to take advantage of, and strengthen the opportunities for, international cooperation offered by the exploration of outer space, as well as the development and application of space science and technology, with full respect for the existing international legal regime relating to the use of outer space and related disarmament and arms-control commitments. We therefore support negotiations to conclude appropriate measures to prevent an arms race in outer space.

Mr. Tauassarov (Kazakhstan): Outer space issues are becoming increasingly relevant to safeguarding international peace and security because of the incredible opportunities for peaceful uses and military developments alike that space provides.

The joint ad hoc meeting of the First and Fourth Committees held last year (see A/C.1/72/PV.11) was crucial for assessing possible challenges to security and sustainability. The ongoing robust expansion into outer space compels us to review measures to bridge the gaps in the existing legal regime to prevent the weaponization of outer space. Confidence-building measures are essential in the process of developing general provisions for preventing the militarization of outer space. In that regard, we see great value in the draft resolution entitled “No first placement of weapons in outer space”. We also support the draft resolution entitled “Transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities”. Discussions were held this year on the prevention of an arms race in outer space under the auspices of Subsidiary Body 3 of the Conference on Disarmament to reach an understanding on areas of commonality, deepen technical discussions, broaden areas of agreement and consider effective measures, including legal instruments for negotiations. We therefore welcome the adoption of the report of the Subsidiary Body.

Kazakhstan fully endorses the draft treaty on the prevention of the placement of weapons in outer space, introduced by China and Russia at the Conference on Disarmament in 2008 and 2014. Kazakhstan supports the establishment of a new expert group intended to further elaborate legally binding measures to prevent an arms race in outer space. An expert from Kazakhstan participated in the first session of the group, from 6 to

17 August in Geneva. We believe that the group’s work will help narrow differences on how the outer-space legal regime can be further codified and developed.

Kazakhstan hosts the Baikonur space-launch site on its territory and has been actively participating in peaceful space exploration programmes with Russia, France and other countries. We believe that it is vital to pursue further discussion on the issue of preventing an arms race in outer space by involving other international bodies that are engaged on this issue. To facilitate the start of those negotiations, we support the draft treaty on the prevention of the placement of weapons in outer space, prepared by China and the Russian Federation.

We view The Hague Code of Conduct as an important part of the non-proliferation regime and underline that the proliferation of sensitive missile technology constitutes a serious threat to international peace and security. At the same time, the Code should not act as an impediment to the peaceful use of space technologies. Having chaired The Hague Code of Conduct regime for the period 2016-2017, we warmly welcome the activities of the Swedish chairmanship for 2018-2019. We salute Sweden’s valuable efforts to fulfil the important mission of The Hague Code of Conduct, and express our support for the draft resolution before the General Assembly on The Hague Code of Conduct, which was endorsed by the member States of The Hague Code of Conduct regime during their seventeenth annual regular meeting, held in Vienna in May.

At present, dozens of countries possess, or are developing, sophisticated space programmes. We must ensure that such dangerous systems, which could potentially be weaponized, do not undermine the existing structure of agreements on arms limitation, particularly in the nuclear-missile sphere.

In conclusion, Kazakhstan, as a responsible international actor and a unilateral adherent to the principles and guidelines of the Missile Technology Control Regime, would like to reinforce that our common goal is to ensure that space remains a sphere of cooperation, free of weapons, to be used for advancing human well-being, development and progress.

Mr. Hilale (Morocco): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Group of African States. The Group aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/73/PV.15), and wishes to make the following remarks on this cluster.

The role of space technology today has become pervasive. Never before have information, communication, banking, education and even political and strategic decision-making been so dependent on space-based technology. It is for that reason that outer space and celestial bodies must continue to be regarded and safeguarded as the common heritage of humankind and must be used, explored and utilized for the benefit and in the interests of all humankind in the spirit of cooperation.

The African Group emphasizes that outer space must be free of nuclear weapons, weapons of mass destruction and, indeed, all other kinds of weapons, as their presence in outer space constitutes an existential threat to global peace and the future survival of humankind. To that end, the Group stresses that outer space, as the common heritage of all humankind, must be explored and utilized exclusively for peaceful purposes and for the benefit of all States, irrespective of their social, economic or scientific development. In that regard, the Group stresses the importance of the international legal framework that allows for equal exploration of outer space based on the principles of the non-appropriation and peaceful use of outer space, in conformity with the five United Nations treaties governing space activities, in particular the 1967 Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies.

The Group stresses the urgent need for a legally binding treaty on the prevention of an arms race in outer space. In that context, the Group welcomes the establishment of the Group of Governmental Experts pursuant to resolution 72/250, with a mandate to consider and make recommendations on substantial elements of an international legally binding instrument on the prevention of an arms race in outer space, including on the prevention of the placement of weapons in outer space. We look forward to the successful completion of the work of the Group of Governmental Experts and hope it will lead to the immediate negotiation of a legally binding treaty in this area.

While reaffirming the importance of the work entrusted to the Conference on Disarmament (CD), the Group expresses its concern at the many years of impasse that have prevented the CD from fulfilling its mandate as the world's single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum. The Group therefore calls on the CD to resume substantive work and negotiations on

the agreed priority areas, including the prevention of an arms race in outer space, taking into account the security interests of all States and without further delay.

With regard to ensuring the sustainability of the peaceful uses of outer space for all States, the Group recalls the adoption of the African Space Policy and Strategy in 2016, which it regards as an important policy framework for the realization of an African outer-space programme within the framework of Agenda 2063 of the African Union. In that regard, the Group reiterates that the immense potential of space technology and applications should be equally beneficial to all Member States, regardless of their level of socioeconomic or scientific development, and calls on the United Nations to promote equal and non-discriminatory access to outer space for all States.

In that connection, the Group also wishes to highlight that the proliferation of space debris remains a major concern for the African Group due to its consequences for the future of exploration and use of outer space. The mitigation of space debris and limitation of its production should therefore be among the priorities of the work of the United Nations. It is against that backdrop that challenges relating to space activities, in particular space debris, should be addressed in such a way as not to jeopardize the development of the space capabilities of developing countries. Furthermore, the Group maintains that the recommendations of the Group of Governmental Experts on Transparency and Confidence-Building Measures in Outer Space Activities continue to represent an important contribution towards maintaining outer space for peaceful purposes.

In conclusion, let me reiterate the commitment of the African Group to the peaceful uses of outer space. The Group pledges to engage constructively with other Member States to fulfil the goals and objectives of a peaceful and weapon-free outer space.

Mr. Poudel Chhetri (Nepal): At the outset, let me reiterate that Nepal considers outer space as part of the common heritage of humankind and maintains its view that its exploration and use should be carried out for the wider benefit of humankind.

All countries, irrespective of their size or level of economic and scientific development, should be given equal opportunities to access space technology. Moreover, countries such as least developed countries and landlocked developing countries, which are

yet to benefit proportionately from the remarkable achievements of space technology, should be given due consideration in terms of access to such technology. My delegation urges technologically advanced countries to support this initiative.

Nepal is firm in its conviction that the weaponization of outer space increases existential threats to humankind. The sanctity of outer space as a zone of harmony and cooperation should be preserved. It should be kept absolutely free of weapons and an arms race prevented. The threat of the weaponization of outer space must be addressed through unremitting international negotiations.

Nepal believes that the prevention of an arms race in outer space is in the interests of maintaining international peace and security and an essential condition for the promotion and strengthening of international cooperation in the exploration and use of outer space for peaceful purposes. In that connection, my delegation welcomes the commencement of its work by the Group of Government Experts tasked with considering and making recommendations on substantial elements of a legally binding international instrument on the prevention of arms race in outer space, including on the prevention of the placement of weapons in outer space.

Nepal believes that transparency and confidence-building measures rooted in political commitments have the potential to create a conducive environment for general and complete disarmament. Such measures are the tools to prevent an arms race in outer space and ensure the sustainability of outer space activities. Moreover, such measures should complement the existing space-related international legal framework without undermining the legal obligations of the international community. In addition, they should not hamper the lawful use of outer space, in particular by latecomers from least developed countries.

Nepal also believes that adherence to existing legal instruments applicable to outer space also helps promote transparency and confidence-building measures among Member States. Nepal believes that the spacefaring States should maintain transparency by sharing information on the principles and goals of their outer-space policies as well as their security-related space activities with other countries. We support the idea of developing the United Nations Offices for

Disarmament Affairs and for Outer Space Affairs as a joint repository for such information.

In conclusion, outer space should be used for the greater good of humankind, including for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Mr. Hwang (France) (*spoke in French*): France associates itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union (see A/C.1/73/PV.15). I would like to make some additional remarks in my national capacity. The full text of my statement is available both in the room and online.

The space sector is evolving rapidly and becoming increasingly important through its applications for the benefit of the people, exceptional discoveries in the field of exploration, and its ever-greater accessibility. It is now essential to our economies and our societies. Civil and military uses of space are increasing. They represent significant vectors for development but also pose many security challenges.

Today's space environment is increasingly complex. The expansion of access to outer space thanks to New Space has given rise to many opportunities, from the reduction in the size of equipment to the availability of new services at ever-lower cost.

Today we face a number of challenges. The first is traffic management. The second challenge, resulting from the growth in traffic, is the increase in debris, much of it travelling in low orbits at high speed.

While space provides crucial services for navigation, communication, meteorology and imaging, it is also a setting for confrontation where some States may be tempted to use force to deny access or threaten the integrity of its components. Moreover, on account of the incredible potential it offers and the potential conflict it generates, outer space, largely free from regulation, has become a security issue and a strategic stability consideration. States must therefore affirm their willingness to respond to these issues by cooperating and promoting a vision of force and power relations regulated by law built around the Charter of the United Nations as a foundation.

France is committed to maintaining peace and security in outer space. In the face of these challenges, the priority must be to ensure the long-term security and sustainability of outer space activities. These issues are fundamental for the economic growth and development of a growing number of countries. We

must prevent a deterioration in the conditions of outer space for its future use so as to extend the benefits of outer space applications to as many people as possible, especially developing countries, and to safeguard future generations' access to outer space. Only together can we achieve that goal.

For France, the actions of the international community must be based on several principles.

First, outer space activities must be undertaken in accordance with the Charter, which applies in its entirety to outer space, and international law, which provides an adequate and relevant framework.

Secondly, the response of the international community must be cross-cutting and take into account the dual nature of space activities. It is necessary to promote the principle of the responsible use of outer space in the pursuit of civil and military space programmes.

Thirdly, responses must be effective, pragmatic and sustained and must be able to provide concrete and immediately measurable benefits. Those benefits must also be sustainable.

Finally, the actions of the international community must be coherent with efforts to identify initiatives aimed at building transparency and confidence among actors and at limiting the possibilities of misunderstanding or escalation. France therefore supports the adoption of transparency and confidence-building measures, as well as the adoption of standards of conduct for actors in outer space.

Several initiatives aimed at preventing the first placement of weapons in outer space have been put forward at the Conference on Disarmament and the First Committee. France notes and shares the concerns expressed about the effectiveness of those initiatives. While we do not oppose legal approaches in principle, France favours proposals that can be implemented immediately given the rapid deterioration of outer space and the urgent nature of the response required.

We welcome the progress made by the Working Group on the Long-term Sustainability of Outer Space Activities. France regrets that that work was not completed, and is open to resuming dialogue with interested States on an initiative that could take the work forward meaningfully and translate it into a political commitment by all to behave responsibly in outer space.

The European Union had proposed a code of conduct on space activities, which was a response to a genuine need. It must be noted that no better alternative proposal has been developed since. We must therefore better understand the criticism of that proposal and consider how to overcome in future the divisions that prevented its adoption, whatever the instrument that may be proposed.

Mr. Abbani (Algeria) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, my country's delegation associates itself with the statements on the prevention of an arms race in outer space delivered on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and the Group of Arab States (see A/C.1/73/PV.15), as well as that delivered today on behalf of the Group African States.

There can be no doubt that today outer space plays a distinct role in a number of sectors — economically, socially and scientifically — especially given the growing scientific and technological developments. More than ever, that calls for ensuring an appropriate environment of security, transparency and trust with regard to the activities undertaken by States in outer space.

Like many other countries, Algeria aspires to use outer space in meeting its development needs. We view outer space as a common heritage owned by all humankind. However, we stress that the exploration and use of outer space must be for purely peaceful purposes leading to the maintenance of peace, security and stability, while promoting international cooperation based on relevant international principles, obligations and laws, in particular the General Assembly Declaration of Legal Principles of 1963 and the 1967 Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies.

The militarization of outer space is a cause for concern, as it poses great risks that might lead to a new dynamic for an arms race. That would result in serious consequences for international peace and security, as well as in negative effects at the economic and social levels. In that regard, Algeria expresses its concern about the negative effects of developing and deploying anti-missile systems in outer space and the pursuit of developing military technologies that might be deployed in it.

Algeria believes that the current legal system of outer space is marred by some shortcomings and

is insufficient to prevent arms race. That requires additional collective efforts, especially within the Conference on Disarmament, to promote the current legal system and bridge the gaps.

Algeria welcomes the fact that the General Assembly, at its previous session, adopted many initiatives that will reinforce the international framework for the prevention of an arms race in outer space, in particular the resolutions on the protection against deploying arms in outer space; threatening to use force or using force against objects in outer space; and the prevention of the placement of weapons in outer space. We welcome the recommendations of the Group of Governmental Experts on Transparency and Confidence-Building Measures in Outer Space Activities.

Algeria also welcomes the work of the Group of Governmental Experts on adopting the basic elements of an international legally binding instrument on the prevention of an arms race in outer space, including the issues pertaining to the prevention of placing arms in outer space. We look forward to the recommendations that will be adopted on this matter next year.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize that the voluntary measures for transparency and streamlining activities related to outer space are additional measures that can supplement, but not supplant, a legally binding treaty to prevent an arms race in outer space. The Conference on Disarmament is the appropriate negotiating framework for such a treaty, with a view to adopting rules and procedures that address the concerns of all parties.

Mr. Jadoon (Pakistan): We align ourselves with the statement delivered on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/73/PV.15).

Outer space is being used by an increasing number of States for civilian and military purposes alike. While our dependence on outer-space applications is on the rise, the risk of the weaponization of outer space is also growing. The countries currently enjoying dominance in outer space should not be blinded by that perception. Their current technological edge will not be able to last forever. Other countries are catching up fast and, this time, developing countries will neither carry the burden of non-proliferation nor accept any discriminatory restrictions hampering their pursuits in outer space.

We need to evolve universal and equitable regulations that can guarantee the exclusively peaceful

nature of outer space before it turns into a new realm for conflict and arms races. The Outer Space Treaty of 1967 recognized that the exploration and use of outer space shall be carried out for the benefit and in the interests of all countries and shall be the province of all humankind. That is our common heritage. The Treaty prohibits the placement of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in outer space but is silent on the placement of other types of weapons. The development and deployment of anti-ballistic missile systems and their integration into space assets has added another dangerous dimension to this issue. These concerns need to be addressed in a comprehensive treaty on the prevention of an arms race in outer space.

The issue of preventing an arms race in outer space has been on the international agenda for a long time. The Conference on Disarmament (CD) has had it under consideration for over three and a half decades. It is eminently right for negotiations on a legally binding treaty to begin. The draft treaty on the prevention of the placement of weapons in outer space, submitted jointly by the Russian Federation and China in 2008 and updated in 2014, provides a concrete basis for the beginning of negotiations. The start of substantive work in this area in the CD would contribute to international and regional peace and security as well as to the strengthening of the global non-proliferation and disarmament regime. It would also end the deadlock in the CD, which is in part due to the refusal of some States to commence negotiations on the prevention of an arms race in outer space. States opposing such negotiations should acknowledge their responsibility in perpetuating the deadlock in the CD.

Pakistan regularly co-sponsors the draft resolution on the prevention of an arms race in outer space that is recommended to the General Assembly by the Committee every year, with the support of an overwhelming majority of States, which calls on the CD to establish a working group on this matter as promptly as possible. Pakistan has also co-sponsored, every year since 2013, the draft resolution entitled "No first placement of weapons in outer space". We welcome the pioneering move by the Russian Federation in announcing the political commitment that it would not be the first to place weapons in outer space. We also appreciate similar announcements by other States.

We welcome the adoption last year of resolution 72/250, entitled "Further practical measures for the prevention of an arms race in outer space". A Pakistani

expert is part of the Group of Governmental Experts established pursuant to that resolution to consider and make recommendations on substantial elements of an international legally binding instrument on the prevention of an arms race in outer space, including on the prevention of the placement of weapons in outer space. We hope that the Group will produce a substantive report that fulfils this mandate faithfully.

We note the valuable informal discussions on the prevention of an arms race in outer space held in the CD over the years, including this year in Subsidiary Body 3, which agreed on a substantive report. Those deliberations, together with those of the Group of Governmental Experts, have helped develop a better understanding of different perspectives and reinforced our view that the contentious issues relating to the prevention of an arms race in outer space can be resolved and should be pursued as a priority.

The Group of Governmental Experts on Transparency and Confidence-Building Measures during 2012-2013 agreed on a consensus report (see A/68/189). Its conclusion that transparency and confidence-building measures should be aimed at increasing the security, safety and sustainability of outer space was widely appreciated. Its recommendation of the further development of international cooperation between spacefaring and non-spacefaring nations in the peaceful domain was also welcomed.

While recognizing the value of transparency and confidence-building measures as well as other non-legally binding measures in promoting trust and confidence among States, Pakistan does not see such voluntary measures as a substitute for legally binding, treaty-based obligations. There are clear gaps in the international legal regime governing the use of outer space, with grave security implications. In our view, those gaps can be plugged only by concluding a treaty on the prevention of an arms race in outer space that prohibits the placement of weapons in outer space and bans the threat or use of force against outer-space objects.

Mr. Soemirat (Indonesia): Indonesia associates itself with the statements delivered under this cluster on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (see A/C.1/73/PV.15).

Indonesia reiterates that outer space and celestial bodies are part of the common heritage of humankind

and must be used, explored and utilized only for the benefit and in the interests of all nations. My delegation reaffirms that the exploration and use of outer space and celestial bodies shall be for peaceful purposes only and carried out for the benefit and in the interests of all countries, irrespective of their degree of economic or scientific development.

There is a shared concern regarding increasing threats to peace and security in outer space and the inadequacy of existing instruments to deter the militarization and weaponization of outer space. While bilateral arms limitations, codes of conduct, voluntary mechanisms and other such tools are important for preventing an arms race in outer space, they are no replacement for a universal, legally binding instrument. Furthermore, with the disarmament stalemate and the volatile international security environment, the issue of preventing an arms race in outer space requires the urgent attention of us all.

For the past two decades, the General Assembly has every year, by overwhelming majority, adopted a resolution calling for the negotiation and conclusion of an international legal instrument on the prevention of the weaponization of outer space. We believe that resolution 72/27, which calls for the exclusively peaceful use of outer space, and resolution 72/250, on the prevention of an arms race in outer space, together with other General Assembly resolutions relating to the prevention of an arms race in outer space, urgently need to be implemented.

As a State member of the Conference on Disarmament (CD), Indonesia welcomes the establishment this year of a subsidiary body on the prevention of an arms race in outer space and supports its work. We are pleased with the in-depth discussions conducted in the Subsidiary Body. Indonesia welcomes the Subsidiary Body's report and is further convinced of the need for a universal legally binding instrument on the prevention of an arms race in outer space.

Indonesia also welcomes the establishment of the Group of Governmental Experts to consider and make recommendations on substantial elements of an international legally binding instrument on the prevention of an arms race in outer space, including on the prevention of the placement of weapons in outer space, which started work in Geneva last August. We look forward to its outcome and fervently hope that it can contribute to the early commencement of

negotiations on a universal legally binding instrument on the prevention of an arms race in outer space. In that connection, Indonesia calls upon the CD, as the sole multilateral disarmament negotiating forum, to begin negotiations on matters related to the prevention of an arms race in outer space without delay. It is time that all countries demonstrated the political will to negotiate.

In conclusion, our delegation underscores that all countries have a responsibility to refrain from any activity that may jeopardize the collective goal of maintaining a weapon-free outer space. Let us all ensure that the exploration and use of outer space and celestial bodies are pursued for solely peaceful objectives and benefit the progress of all humankind.

Mr. Suárez Moreno (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/73/PV.15).

Technological and scientific developments and advances in the exploration and use of outer space must be pursued for peace and the economic and social development of all peoples. The efforts of the United Nations to prevent the deployment of weapons and triggering of an arms race in outer space are therefore of the utmost importance. In that regard, we note with concern the recent statements made by a certain Power explicitly designating outer space as a setting for confrontation. We believe that the formulation of policies in this area with a militaristic focus undermines the trust, dialogue and cooperation required to ensure outer space remains a realm for exclusively peaceful activities for the benefit and in the interests of humankind.

Placing weapons in outer space, far from contributing to international security, would heighten vulnerability and perceived insecurity for the entire global community, including those States potentially involved in such an arms race. In the face of such challenges, we reaffirm the importance of multilateralism for taking timely action to prevent conflicts, including by tackling new dimensions of threats, the coercion of peoples and technological gaps.

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela believes that outer space is part of the common heritage of humankind, which is why balanced access for all nations to its use must be guaranteed, based on international

cooperation in areas such as scientific research and technology transfer. We also believe that there is a common but differentiated responsibility when it comes to preventing an arms race in outer space, since not all countries have the capacity to deploy military systems, whether defensive or offensive, in outer space, or the necessary technology to pursue peaceful uses of outer space. In that regard, we believe it is important to strengthen policies relating to international cooperation and technology transfer so as to promote the use of outer space for development, education, science and peace.

Fifty-one years since the adoption of the Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies, and in the light of the dangers that may arise from the militarization of outer space, Venezuela is convinced that we must work to strengthen, as soon as possible, international space law; negotiating and concluding new international legal instruments to complement the existing regime in this area is therefore a crucial objective. Our country therefore reaffirms its support for the draft treaty introduced in 2008 by China and Russia at the Conference on Disarmament, which was updated in 2014 and which we view as a valuable initiative aimed at preventing the deployment of weapons, and thereby an arms race, in outer space.

We also support existing initiatives on the implementation of transparency and confidence-building measures among States in activities in this area. In that regard, we support the work of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space and encourage it to continue playing its central role in promoting transparency and trust in outer space activities. That body is equipped with the necessary mandate to consider issues related to disarmament that could affect the sustainability of the outer-space environment. That is why Venezuela welcomed resolution 72/27, adopted by the General Assembly at its seventy-second session and entitled “No first placement of weapons in outer space”, which reaffirms the importance and urgency of the objective to prevent an arms race in outer space and the willingness of States to contribute to reaching that common goal.

Finally, Venezuela reiterates its full commitment to multilateralism as the only way to reach peaceful solutions to the challenges and obstacles that affect peace, security, development, international solidarity and cooperation and human rights, with strict adherence

to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

Ms. Wood (Australia): Australia has long been a spacefaring nation, being the seventh nation to launch a satellite and, in doing so, just the third nation to launch from its own territory. This year, on 1 July, we added further to our proud space history with the establishment of the Australian Space Agency. The Australian Space Agency is responsible for whole-of-government coordination of civil space matters, and is the primary source of advice to Government on civil space policy. The Space Agency will drive further innovation across the economy and will complement our defence exports strategy.

Space is democratizing, and the barriers to accessing space are tumbling as the sector is disrupted by technology that is far cheaper to build, launch and maintain. There has been a large uptick in the number of States that have become space-faring nations, seeking the same societal and economic benefits that the established space players have enjoyed almost exclusively. Of course, just as in terrestrial domains, increased activity poses considerable challenges to the finite resources of the spectrum and the available orbital slots.

More activity also, unfortunately, means more space debris. That will increase the costs for commercial and civil activities in space, principally through more collision-avoidance manoeuvres that, in turn, reduce the operating lifespan of satellites. Space debris also makes managing orbital traffic more challenging.

All this change is occurring under an international framework of treaties that was built in a very different technological and strategic environment. Today space nations grapple with the question of whether our existing framework is adequate, especially as space security considerations evolve.

Russia and China have, for many years, promoted a draft treaty on the prevention of the placement of weapons in outer space. Russia also promotes the no-first-placement initiative, where countries pledge not to be the first to place weapons in space. While Australia is in favour of the prevention of an arms race in outer space, we do not support either of those initiatives. Both would provide limited comfort and could have counterproductive consequences by allowing unfettered development of terrestrial and dual-use counter-space systems. There are two fundamental issues with both

the proposals. First, the proposed definition of a space weapon is unworkable. It fails to address the problem of terrestrial, dual-use threats, as well as the stockpiling of deployable weapons. Secondly, they fail to provide a verification mechanism to determine whether weapons have been placed, or have been developed to be placed, in space. Any manoeuvrable space object is a potential weapon.

It is those problems of verification and dual-use capability that make credible arms control in outer space such a challenge. Ostensibly, civilian satellites can disguise malign purposes. Our view is that our efforts are better focused on limiting bad behaviour in space.

While we acknowledge work towards possible legally binding instruments, we see greater practical utility in first codifying and reinforcing good behaviour through transparency and confidence-building measures and normative principles. That was recognized in the 2013 report of the Group of Governmental Experts on space (see A/68/189), which recommended that States work together on transparency and confidence-building measures and build norms of responsible behaviour in space. The report was agreed by consensus and provides a framework for space safety, security and sustainability that can be used immediately on a voluntary basis. The value of transparency and confidence-building measures is clear: they provide pragmatic, voluntary actions through which Governments can address challenges and share information with the aim of creating mutual understanding and reducing tensions. Over time, States develop habits, patterns and norms of international behaviour.

Australia is committed to a rules-based global order, which extends to space. We want to work with other nations on challenges and initiatives to ensure the long-term sustainability, safety and security of the outer-space domain. We will continue our collaborative work, while examining the existing legal framework for outer space and working out how it can best function for current and future needs.

Mr. Ibrahim (Nigeria): Let me begin by expressing the appreciation of my delegation for your efforts and able leadership, Mr. Chair, as well as to further assure you and the Bureau of our continued cooperation and support.

The delegation of Nigeria aligns itself with the statements delivered under this cluster on behalf

of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/73/PV.15) and, earlier during this meeting, on behalf of the Group of African States.

The desire to explore and exploit resources beyond the boundaries of the Earth for economic development and an improvement in the quality of life for humankind led to technological inventions as well as innovations that have seen satellites being launched and several other activities in outer space. Space technology has produced tools that enable us to perform weather forecasting, environmental protection, telemedicine, agriculture and education, to mention just a few. It is for that reason that outer space and celestial bodies must continue to be regarded and safeguarded as the common heritage of humankind and used, explored and utilized for the benefit and in the interests of all humankind in the spirit of cooperation. The exploration and the use of outer space and celestial bodies shall therefore be for peaceful purposes and carried out for the benefit and in the interest of all countries, irrespective of their degree of economic or scientific development.

The prevention of an arms race in outer space has taken on greater urgency because of legitimate concerns that existing legal instruments are inadequate to deter the further militarization of outer space or prevent its weaponization. For that purpose, my delegation stresses the need to consolidate and reinforce existing regimes and enhance their effectiveness through the creation of a legally binding treaty on the prevention of an arms race in outer space.

Nigeria therefore welcomes the establishment of the Group of Governmental Experts pursuant to General Assembly resolution 72/250, with the mandate to consider and make recommendations on substantial elements of an international legally binding instrument on the prevention of an arms race in outer space, including the prevention of the placement of weapons in outer space. We look forward to the successful completion of the work of the Group and hope it will lead to immediate negotiations on a legally binding treaty on the prevention of an arms race in outer space.

My delegation believes that all States, especially those with major space capabilities, have a special responsibility to contribute actively to the objective of the peaceful use of outer space and the prevention of an arms race in outer space. They should also refrain from actions contrary to that objective and the relevant existing treaties, in the interest of maintaining

international peace and security and promoting international cooperation.

In that regard, we affirm that the Conference on Disarmament is the sole multilateral disarmament negotiation forum of the international community, which has the primary role in substantive negotiations on priority questions of disarmament. We therefore firmly believe that it is time to start negotiations in good faith in the Conference on Disarmament on matters related to the prevention of an arms race in outer space.

Nigeria remains committed to using its growing space science capabilities for developmental purposes. To that end, we have embarked upon several developmental projects, including a desertification sensitivity index, population dissymmetric analysis and carbon emission assessments. Nigeria firmly believes that space technology has the immense potential to benefit both developed and developing countries. In that regard, the United Nations needs to promote equal non-discriminatory access to outer space, irrespective of levels of social, economic or scientific development.

Ms. Sein (Myanmar): Myanmar aligns itself with the statements delivered on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (see A/C.1/73/PV.15).

Maintaining outer space safe, secure, stable and sustainable and preventing it from becoming an area of conflict is imperative for all of us. The increasing human space activities, the growing number and diversity of actors operating in outer space, the proliferation of hazardous space debris and the increasing dependence on outer space in civilian, Government and military sectors could lead to an increased risk of its weaponization, space accidents and conflicts over scarce resources.

While the advancement of technological capabilities and commercial utilization of outer space is commendable, we have to keep in mind that those advanced technologies should ultimately be used for the benefit of humankind, for its socioeconomic and technological development. In addition, the exploration and the use of outer space should be for peaceful purposes only and be carried out for the benefit of all countries and their peoples, regardless of their level of economic or scientific development. To that end, it is necessary for all States to work together and redouble their efforts to address the increasing threats

to peace and security in outer space, over which we all have concerns.

Preventing an arms race in outer space and ensuring strict compliance with the existing legal frameworks concerning the use of outer space are important. In doing so, transparency and confidence-building measures are essential to maintain the peace, security, safety and sustainability of activities in outer space and preserve a secure space environment for all.

The recommendations of the Group of Governmental Experts established pursuant to resolution 65/68, contained in its consensus report of 29 July 2013 (see A/68/189), are a good basis for the outer space transparency and confidence-building measures. They are relevant and necessary for the prevention of an arms race in outer space. However, they are voluntary measures and cannot be a substitute for a legally binding treaty on the prevention of an arms race in outer space.

We therefore welcome all efforts and proposals made under the agenda item "Prevention of an arms race in outer space", including the updated draft treaty text submitted jointly by the Russian Federation and China. We believe that this initiative is constructive and a good contribution to the work of the Conference on Disarmament.

The Conference on Disarmament is the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum of the international community and has the primary role of dealing with issues of disarmament. In that regard, we call for the Conference on Disarmament to start, without delay, negotiations on matters related to the prevention of an arms race in outer space, including the proposed draft treaty.

It is in the common interests of all humankind to make progress on the exploration and the use of outer space. It is therefore our common responsibility to strengthen the sustainability, stability and security of outer space. We must act together to realize our common goal of creating a safe, secure, stable and sustainable outer space.

Mr. Incarnato (Italy): Italy aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union (see A/C.1/73/PV.15). I would like to add some remarks in my national capacity.

Space-based applications today offer unique resources, including in the domains of economic growth and innovation. The Internet is very much

dependent upon space. Satellite systems are essential for monitoring land, maritime and air security, as well as in facing critical issues such as natural disaster management and climate change. The space domain enables a number of services that have become essential for the well-functioning of our economies and security.

The sharp increase in the number of objects in space, together with our growing reliance on space resources, infrastructure and activities, is among the major reasons that a comprehensive and effective international regulatory environment should be put in place for the long-term sustainability, safety and security of the space environment.

We welcome the fiftieth anniversary of the first United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, which was celebrated in June in Vienna, and the related draft resolution foreseen for adoption by the General Assembly at its current session. We are proud to have taken an active role in its negotiation and are ready to contribute to the development of the Space 2030 agenda and its implementation plan over the next two years. We also commend the establishment of a dedicated working group on the matter under the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS).

Italy appreciates the important work carried out by the COPUOS Working Group on the Long-term Sustainability of Outer Space Activities in order to adopt a compendium of guidelines. We welcome the fact that consensus was reached on the preamble and 21 long-term sustainability guidelines, although no agreement was achieved on the final adoption of the compendium and its transmission to the General Assembly.

Nevertheless, we believe that important work could represent a solid basis for a more comprehensive voluntary instrument covering substantive aspects of safety, security and sustainability of outer space activities. Such an instrument would contribute to globally shared principles of responsible behaviour, which should include non-interference in the peaceful exploration and use of outer space; preventing and mitigating the creation of debris; international cooperation in space; preserving the integrity of the space environment; equitable access to outer space; and transparency in the conduct of space exploration and exploitation activities.

We are also convinced that the effective implementation of transparency and confidence-building measures

represents a crucial step towards achieving greater safety, security and sustainability in outer space activities, including such measures identified by the Group of Governmental Experts on Transparency and Confidence-Building Measures in Outer Space Activities in 2013 and endorsed by the General Assembly. That set of measures could be established by: first, the proposed voluntary instrument covering mechanisms of information-sharing related to national space strategies, policies and programmes; secondly, notification regarding space missions and manoeuvres, with a view to reducing the risk of miscommunication and improving space traffic management; and, thirdly, consultation with a view to decreasing the risk of disputes. We therefore continue to believe that there would be value in agreeing a comprehensive voluntary instrument within the framework of the United Nations.

Italy remains fully committed to preventing an arms race in outer space and to preventing outer space from becoming an area of conflict as essential conditions to strengthen strategic stability. We therefore support the ongoing discussions within the Group of Governmental Experts on Further Practical Measures for the Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space, established by resolution 72/250, in which we actively take part. While not excluding the long-term objective of an international legally binding instrument on the prevention of an arms race in outer space, we believe that goal could be better achieved through a progressive approach entailing first the adoption of a voluntary instrument covering the safety, security and sustainability of outer space activities. We will therefore continue to contribute to the debate within the Group of Governmental Experts with a constructive approach. We hope that such a debate can in turn advance the work of the Conference on Disarmament in this important domain.

Mr. Li Sui (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): This year marks the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, making it a year of milestone significance in the history of global space governance. The United Nations has made great efforts over the years towards the prevention of an arms race in outer space. This year, the United Nations has achieved major breakthroughs on the issue of outer space security. Mandated by resolution 72/250 and established by the Secretary-General, the Group of Governmental Experts on the Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space began its

work to consider and to make recommendations on the substantive elements of an international legally binding instrument to prevent the weaponization of outer space.

The Disarmament Commission put outer space on its agenda for the first time in the new review cycle at the beginning of this year, with a focus on transparency- and confidence-building measures (TCBMs) aimed at the prevention of an arms race in outer space. In addition, the Conference on Disarmament (CD) has established a subsidiary body to hold in-depth discussions on all core issues, including the prevention of an arms race in outer space. Those developments duly reflect the concerns of the international community with respect to security in outer space and the efforts by the international community to prevent the weaponization of outer space.

China has always been against the weaponization of and an arms race in outer space and for years has co-sponsored General Assembly resolutions relating to outer space security. In 2008, China and Russia jointly submitted to the CD a draft treaty on the prevention of the placement of weapons in outer space and the threat of or use of force against outer space objects. Subsequently, in 2014, an updated version was submitted, which has received extensive support.

In July, along with Russia and the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs, China co-hosted an international workshop in Beijing on the prevention of an arms race in outer space. To which members of the Group of Governmental Experts and non-governmental organization representatives were invited to discuss relevant issues relating to the space security landscape, the threat of weaponization, the sufficiency of existing legal systems and the elements of a future legally binding instrument in order to prepare for the commencement of the work of the Group of Governmental Experts.

In August, China participated in the first session of the Group in a positive and constructive manner and jointly submitted a position paper with Russia, putting forward views and suggestions on the prevention of the weaponization of outer space and elements of future legal instruments. The discussions during the session were extensive and in-depth. The members expressed the views that the current situation in outer space is grim with risks of an arms race and that the need for global space security governance is urgent. Many good suggestions were put forward by the Group's members during the discussion with respect to elements of a

future legally binding instrument on preventing the weaponization of outer space.

We hope the Group can fulfil its mandate, conclude its report by consensus and make recommendations on the elements of a future legally binding instrument. It must be stressed that the Conference on Disarmament remains the most appropriate forum for the negotiation of an international legally binding instrument on the prevention of the weaponization of outer space. The Group supports and complements the work of the CD. Once the CD has agreed upon a balanced and comprehensive work programme to start relevant negotiations on the prevention of an arms race in outer space, the Group should conclude its work and transmit the results of its deliberations to the CD through the Secretary-General.

Given the commencement of the Group's work, and in order to ensure better understanding by the international community, China joins Russia in introducing draft decision A/C.1/73/L.50 to the First Committee this year. The draft decision relates to the work of the Group of Governmental Experts and the CD on the prevention of an arms race in outer space and proposes that further practical measures for the prevention of an arms race in outer space be included in the provisional agenda of the General Assembly at its seventy-fourth session. We hope all parties will support the draft decision.

China attaches importance to TCBMs in space activities. China is the main sponsor of the relevant resolutions and was an advocate for the establishment of the Group of Governmental Experts on Transparency and Confidence-Building Measures in Outer Space Activities in 2012. China actively participates in the work of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space Working Group on guidelines for the long-term sustainability of outer space activities. We are of the view that appropriate and practical TCBMs in space activities are conducive to enhancing mutual trust, reducing miscalculation and regulating space activities. Such measures are helpful to maintaining space security by complementing the process of preventing the weaponization of and an arms race in outer space. However, TCBMs are not legally binding, which is an insurmountable limitation. Therefore, they cannot replace the negotiation of legal instruments on arms control in outer space.

Outer space is the common heritage of all humankind. Consequently, it is the shared responsibility of all countries to safeguard its security. China stands ready, together with members of the international community, to make a continuous contribution to safeguarding lasting peace and security and building a community of a shared future in outer space for humankind.

Mr. Liddle (United Kingdom): The United Kingdom aligns itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union (see A/C.1/73/PV.15). I would now like to make some remarks in a national capacity.

Today we face an increasingly congested and contested space environment. The international legal framework, including the Outer Space Treaty, has served us well for 50 years. We need to continue to develop that framework to reflect our evolving use of space. Rapid developments in the commercial space sector present both opportunities and challenges. The expected increase in satellite launches has implications for space debris and the long-term sustainability of outer space activities, as well as opportunities for peaceful development and commerce. As we rely more on space in our daily lives, we must protect the space environment for all.

Twenty-one of the long-term sustainability guidelines negotiated at the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space enjoy consensus. We should now consider how to put them into practical effect. We are pleased to engage in the Group of Governmental Experts on Preventing an Arms Race in Outer Space. Although the United Kingdom does not rule out the possibility of agreeing a legally binding treaty on outer space in future, serious political, technological and practical challenges must be resolved before negotiations can start. Any new and binding instrument would need to be comprehensive, effective and verifiable.

We would need to arrive at a common understanding of what we mean by a space weapon. In space, any object with manoeuvring capabilities can in theory be used for offensive purposes. Systems in space can also be damaged from Earth. Dual-use technologies present an additional challenge.

We are very concerned by the activities of certain States. In February 2017, a Russian Air Force Squadron Commander stated that Russia was developing new missiles with the express intent of destroying satellites. Russia's Ministry of Defence recently announced that its space troops have received a mobile laser system

known as the Peresvet. Verification would therefore have to be a key part of any new instrument. Arrangements for monitoring and maintaining compliance would be required to ensure trust among States. Verification may be challenging. There are limits to what can be verified once a vehicle has been launched. Changes to orbits can be measured, evaluated and attributed to unforeseen events such as collisions. As well as accidents, there are threats. One example of an on-orbit threat is the co-orbital anti-satellite weapons known as space-stalkers. The long-term close proximity of another satellite poses a latent threat and should be discouraged, but routine space operations could bring space objects close to another nation's satellites, which has to be permitted. It is therefore important to clarify acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. We would have to consider on-Earth technologies that can affect satellites and the question of the attribution of attacks.

Those and other important elements are missing from the proposed draft treaty on the prevention of the placement of weapons in outer space. The draft does not address fundamental issues of intent and behaviour, nor does it seek to prevent the development of anti-satellite weapons located on Earth.

Technical principles must be translated into concepts of diplomatic utility. The United Kingdom believes that the Group of Governmental Experts on Further Practical Measures for the Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space should identify elements that could help form a set of non-legally binding rules, principles, guidelines and transparency and confidence-building measures that support the conduct of human space activity in a safe, secure and sustainable way and in compliance with international law.

Mr. Lee Jang-keun (Republic of Korea): The development of space technologies and the significant increase in the number of space actors have made our everyday socioeconomic life more dependent on space activities than ever before, and the risks and challenges associated with the safety, security and sustainability of outer space have increased in proportion. To name just a few, space debris, the potential collision of space objects and irresponsible behaviours pose serious threats to spacefaring and non-spacefaring nations alike. Mindful of such challenges, the Republic of Korea reaffirms its commitment to the peaceful uses of outer space and urges all States to use outer space responsibly and transparently, in accordance with existing international norms.

The pace of development of outer-space norms has often been criticized as being too slow to reflect contemporary realities. While those claims are not unfounded, it is my delegation's view that the outer space treaties provide us with effective common ground in our joint endeavour to prevent an arms race in outer space. We have also noted the efforts that the international community has made to achieve progress on space-related norms, especially in recent years. In that regard, my delegation welcomed the substantive discussions on this subject in various disarmament bodies this year — the Conference on Disarmament, the United Nations Disarmament Commission and the Group of Governmental Experts on Further Practical Measures for the Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space. We note the launch of a new Group of Governmental Experts this year. While some difficulties still remain, such as the lack of definitions for space weapons and verification measures, we hope that the Group will continue to explore practical options for enhancing peace and security in outer space, while not unduly limiting its peaceful uses. My Government will continue to engage constructively through its participation in the Group of Governmental Experts.

In our joint efforts to advance the peaceful use of outer space, my delegation believes that priority should be given to transparency and confidence-building measures. We believe that all forms of such measures — unilateral declarations, bilateral commitments and multilateral codes of conduct — encourage responsible actions in outer space and are useful and often essential in addressing concerns about the security and sustainability of outer space. They help to reduce the risks of miscalculation and misunderstanding and to create a climate of trust and confidence. In that regard, my Government attaches importance to the 2013 consensus report (see A/68/189) of the Group of Governmental Experts on Transparency and Confidence-building Measures in Outer Space Activities, which includes voluntary transparency and confidence-building measures. We welcome the fact that the Disarmament Commission has set out this year to prepare recommendations for promoting the practical implementation of such measures for outer space activities. We also hope that the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space will complete its work on the outstanding guidelines for the long-term sustainability of outer space activities as soon as possible.

The Republic of Korea will continue to play a constructive role in the various United Nations bodies and relevant space forums in order to ensure the peaceful use of outer space and prevent an arms race there.

Mr. Belousov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): This is the second time that you have called me an ambassador, Mr. Chair. While I am not an ambassador yet, I will be potentially, like many others in this room. I will now turn to my statement. I apologize for that remark.

The weaponization of outer space would have a significantly destabilizing impact on international peace and security. One of Russia's foreign-policy priorities therefore continues to be preventing an arms race in outer space and keeping it free of weapons. We have taken a responsible approach to dealing with this issue and that of the security of space activities in general. This has been reflected in the various specialized multilateral forums, principally the Conference on Disarmament and the United Nations Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space. However, there have been many moments in this work recently that do not make us optimistic.

The Conference on Disarmament has now been deadlocked for two decades. As a result, we have not succeeded in advancing the negotiations on the issue of preventing an arms race in outer space and in particular on the draft agreement proposed by Russia and China on preventing the placement of weapons in outer space and the use or threat of use of force against outer-space objects. In Vienna this year, agreement could not be reached on key aspects of the safety of space operations. However, there are positive signs as well, of which the Group of Governmental Experts on Further Practical Measures for the Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space is a good example. The Group held its first meeting in Geneva in August, inspiring hope that the experts will be able to fulfil their mandate to prepare recommendations on the elements of a legally binding multilateral instrument on the prevention of an arms race in outer space, including preventing the deployment of weapons in outer space. In addition, it appears that the international community has reached a consensus on the development of transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space, based on the recommendations of the Group of Governmental Experts on Transparency and Confidence-building Measures in Outer Space Activities. In any case, all have said that they are in favour. It is another matter

altogether that States appear to have different views on how to effectively realize these measures' potential.

Against that overall backdrop, which can be termed positive, albeit with reservations, the characteristic tendency of the United States to further toughen its internal regulations on space activities, particularly its military aspects, is in marked contrast. This is about establishing, beyond any reasonable measure of sufficiency, the concept of self-defence in outer space, which has nothing in common with the criteria outlined in Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations. We would like to point out that the possibility of the adoption of pre-emptive and anticipatory measures in outer space on the basis of subjective assessments has long been foreseen in documents regulating United States space operations and special military directives. And that is where the chief danger of such an approach lies. That gives rise to the question of how countries such as the Russian Federation should plan their space activities if United States documents contemplate the use of self-defence for a broad range of reasons, right up to the defence of individuals and their property and indeed generally in cases of infringement on the rights of the United States. Considering all that, it is hardly surprising that the United States national space strategy announced in March characterizes outer space as a war-fighting domain. Staying on a course of ensuring its dominance in space will certainly not contribute to constructive dialogue on issues of strategic stability. If it continues, the work on every negotiation track related to outer space will come to nothing.

This year, the Russian Federation, together with like-minded States, has prepared one draft decision and two draft resolutions to be submitted for the Committee's consideration. This has to do chiefly with the specialized Group of Governmental Experts on Further Practical Measures for the Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space. Given that the Group will continue to hold meetings next year, during this session we are proposing the adoption of a draft procedural decision (A/C.1/73/L.50) aimed at anchoring the relevant item in the General Assembly agenda. Another document is draft resolution A/C.1/73/L.51, which addresses the issue of no first placement of weapons in outer space. Lastly, we will be submitting draft resolution A/C.1/73/L.68/Rev.1, entitled "Transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities", another resolution that is already a perennial.

We hope that our three draft texts will be adopted by consensus during the current session.

Mr. Nakai (Japan): An increasing number of States are enjoying the economic, social and national security benefits of outer space activities today. While the opportunities for and accessibility of outer space activities are growing, we also face serious challenges, such as a greater volume of space debris. It has become all the more critical for the international community to ensure the safety, security and sustainability of outer space for the welfare and development of humankind.

The importance of enhancing the rule of law in outer space must be reaffirmed. Japan reiterates how important it is to implement the principles of responsible behaviour for outer space activities, which could be a significant step forward for international rule-making. We encourage Member States to refrain from any action that brings about the damage or destruction of space objects, directly or indirectly. We must prevent an arms race in outer space. We have participated in substantive discussions on the prevention of an arms race in outer space in the Conference on Disarmament, as well as in this year's meetings of the Group of Governmental Experts on Further Practical Measures for the Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space, based on that firm conviction. It is also our view that the discussion of this issue should reflect both the complexity and immense potential of the peaceful uses of outer space.

As we explore how the international community can preserve and enhance the long-term safety, security and sustainability of outer space, transparency and confidence-building measures can play an important role in building confidence and mutual trust among space actors. We affirm our commitment to this endeavour and call on all Member States to review and implement to the extent that they are able the proposed measures recommended in the 2013 report of the Group of Governmental Experts on Transparency and Confidence-Building Measures in Outer Space Activities (see A/68/189).

Japan believes that the eight years of substantive work of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, discussing guidelines for the long-term sustainability of outer space activities, have deepened our awareness and understanding of how we can use outer space in a more sustainable manner. Japan encourages

all Member States to follow the 21 guidelines on which consensus was reached.

Space debris is a real threat to any entity conducting any type of activity in space. Dangerous behaviours that generate a large amount of space debris, such as anti-satellite attacks, are therefore a matter of great concern to the international community. In particular, we are seriously concerned about the development and deployment of anti-satellite weapon capabilities, including ground-based ones. In order to address the problems of long-lived space debris, we will intensify our efforts in the field of space situational awareness and in developing technology for space debris removal.

In conclusion, I would like to re-emphasize our commitment to continuing to work closely with the international community to ensure the safety, security and sustainability of outer space activities.

Mr. Perera (Sri Lanka): It is indeed a pleasure to see you chairing the work of the Committee, Sir, and we wish you well as you steer our work.

Outer space holds immense benefits for humankind that have helped us make great strides in our global efforts to address the world's most pressing challenges. Space technologies, from satellite telecommunications to remote sensing, have brought a plethora of positive outcomes for the global good. There is evidence that space brings great socioeconomic benefits to the world and continues to serve as a vital tool in the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. However, all those benefits and those yet to come rely on a peaceful outer space, one that belongs to humankind as a whole. In recent years we have seen an increase in the number of military satellites, and of States acquiring satellites for military purposes. Those kinds of interests competing for dominance in space could destabilize international peace and security. It is therefore incumbent on those who explore and use outer space to keep it free of conflict and prevent it from becoming another arena in the arms race. Sri Lanka firmly believes that outer space must not become another area for an arms race and that keeping it free of conflict is essential if we are to avoid grave danger to international peace and security. We reaffirm our steadfast commitment to protecting outer space as a common boon for humankind and to taking every possible measure to ensure the peaceful use of outer space and the prevention of an arms race there.

It is imperative to ensure that all States comply with the existing arms-limitation and disarmament agreements relevant to outer space and with the existing legal regime governing the use of outer space. We want to emphasize the central role of the Conference on Disarmament as the sole multilateral disarmament negotiating forum, with the primary role in negotiating multilateral agreements on the prevention of an arms race in outer space in all its aspects. Sri Lanka will give its full support to such an endeavour, as we have always done for initiatives aimed at preserving peace and preventing conflict. Following the traditional practice, Sri Lanka, together with Egypt, has introduced a draft resolution (A/C.1/73/L.3) entitled “Prevention of an arms race in outer space” in the First Committee, for which we seek the support of all member States.

Sri Lanka remains committed to striving with all States and other stakeholders to keep outer space free from conflict. We look forward to constructive engagement on that issue in this thematic discussion.

Mr. Diamonds (Namibia): Namibia associates itself with the statement made by the Chair of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see/A/C.1/73/PV.15) and with the statement made earlier on behalf of the Group of African States.

Namibia supports the space policy and strategy adopted by the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union, held in Addis Ababa in January 2016, which highlights the role of space science and technology in Africa’s socioeconomic development and the need to collectively address those development challenges.

Outer space technology and weapons of mass destruction have gone from being science fiction to science reality. In this age of rapidly advancing space technology, disarmament discussions, particularly on outer space, appear to be adopting an increasingly menacing tone, which threatens to overtake a multilateral and unified vision of peace. The expression “when elephants fight, it is the grass that suffers” has great relevance in that highly technological field. Indeed, outer space weapons could exacerbate the divide between the developed and the developing world and undermine any rules-based multilateral system if we are not careful.

The application of information and communications technology in the area of weapons of mass destruction poses an existential threat to our global society.

While Africa seeks to silence the guns by 2020, we see the potential development of secret and malicious technology being developed outside the traditional battlefields on which the existing international legal framework is focused. Our security concerns overlap with conventional and small arms. It is imperative that we establish a multilateral regime that in all areas — whether military, financial or related to socioeconomic infrastructure — speaks to the needs of all Member States in terms of prevention, including of cyberattacks.

Indeed, the potential for the malicious undermining of sovereignty, whether by a State or criminal element, is a growing threat. Namibia therefore encourages informal discussions by the United Nations Disarmament Commission on the practical implementation of measures aimed at outer space activities with the goal of preventing an arms race in outer space, as proposed by China, the Russian Federation and the United States and as mandated by resolution 71/82 of 5 December 2016.

Namibia supports the need for the next three-year cycle of the Commission from 2018 to 2020 to review the coherence of outer space policy across the various United Nations forums, with positive coordination between the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs and the Office of Outer Space Affairs.

Namibia notes the recommendations in the 2013 report of the Group of Governmental Experts regarding the implementation of transparency and confidence-building measures. Continued engagement with the broader space community, including civil society, academia and the private sector, is welcomed and encouraged. Such cooperation highlights the use of other space technologies to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and overcome challenges to security. The multilateral focus emphasizes compliance with other legal regimes and the need for negotiations on an instrument to prevent an arms race in outer space.

Namibia therefore co-sponsored draft decision A/C.1/73/L.50, entitled “Further practical measures for the prevention of an arms race in outer space”, calling for a new Group of Governmental Experts tasked with considering and making recommendations on the substantial elements of a legally binding instrument on the prevention of an arms race in outer space, including, inter alia, on the prevention of the placement

of weapons in outer space. We would like to see an open-ended working group, with a participatory and inclusive negotiating mechanism.

In conclusion, Namibia underscores the importance of international cooperation in the area of space exploration to ensure the priority use of space technology applications in order to help meet the global development goals of Namibia and the African continent at large.

Mr. Robotjazi (Islamic Republic of Iran): My delegation associates itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see/A/C.1/73/PV.15).

According to international space law, outer space is the common heritage and province of all humankind and all States have the freedom and equality to access outer space for peaceful purposes. With that right comes the obligation that the use of outer space by one country should not degrade the space environment for future users, as well as the commitment that the exploration and use of outer space should be for the benefit of all countries, irrespective of their degree of economic or scientific development.

However, the militarization and weaponization of outer space undermine those global rules and commitments. To ensure a peaceful outer space environment, the prevention of its weaponization and of an outer space arms race is an essential and urgent priority. Rapid advances in space science and technology and existing shortcomings in international space law, coupled with the irresponsible actions and policies of certain States, have made the danger of the weaponization of outer space more imminent than ever. As a result, the occurrence of an arms race in outer space is a real possibility today.

We are very concerned about the space policies and plans of the United States, which threaten the sustainability of a peaceful space environment and risk triggering a destructive arms competition in outer space. The United States clearly has the intention to dominate space for national military advantage and to control the access of all other countries to outer space. That is a serious threat for international security. The United States spends tens of billions of dollars each year to acquire advanced offensive space capabilities, such as developing space-based missile defence interceptors and space-based global strike weapons.

In 2002, the United States, through its unilateral withdrawal from the 1972 Treaty on the Limitation of Anti-Ballistic Missile Systems, removed the greatest barrier to testing and deploying space-based weapons, which was a treaty limitation. The Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty had explicitly outlawed the deployment of space-based weapon systems and the testing of the components of such systems.

On 21 February 2008, the United States introduced anti-satellite weapons and used a modified sea-based theatre missile defence interceptor to destroy a satellite on the basis of unjustifiable and unverifiable claims. It recently announced its decision to create a space force within its military forces and has officially stated that space is a war-fighting domain.

Since the 1980s, the United States has become the principal obstacle to the development of explicit international legally binding rules prohibiting a deliberate attack on space objects. It has also blocked any attempt in the Conference on Disarmament (CD) to start negotiations on a legally binding instrument to prevent an arms race in outer space, standing alone against the rest of the world in doing so.

Those are some examples of the United States' irresponsible space policy and behaviour, which violate the basic principles of the Outer Space Treaty. The United States cannot and will not be able to dominate space. However, its destabilizing action creates insecurity in outer space. The international community should not let it decide who should use outer space. Additional international legal provisions are needed to prohibit the weaponization of outer space in all its aspects, protect satellites and prevent the deployment of space weapons. Iran strongly supports the efforts and proposals within the CD concerning the prevention of the weaponization of outer space.

Iran notes the complementary role of transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities and their contribution to efforts to prevent an arms race in outer space. However, given their intrinsic limitations, such measures cannot replace negotiations.

In conclusion, I wish to stress that Iran stands ready to support all genuine efforts aimed at ensuring that the realm of outer space will always be devoted to exclusively peaceful uses.

Mr. Sivamohan (Malaysia): Malaysia associates itself with the statement made on behalf of the

Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) for this cluster (see A/C.1/73/PV.15).

As a member of the Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) on the Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space, Malaysia is pleased with the work undertaken by that body to date. We hope that the GGE will be able to spur inclusive dialogue, in accordance with resolution 72/250. In view of the rapid technological development in that field, the GGE's work, including its work on the application of international law, is timely and important.

Moving forward, the use and exploration of outer space by the international community must be undertaken in an exclusively peaceful manner. In that connection, Malaysia reaffirms its unwavering support for multilateral collaboration pursued through, inter alia, the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space and the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs. Indeed, United Nations-led forums remain vital in forging convergence of interests and developing common perspectives in that evolving area.

Malaysia will continue to support space-related initiatives, including confidence-building measures, under the ASEAN Regional Forum and other ASEAN sectoral bodies. Recognizing that governmental engagement alone is insufficient, we also reiterate the need for broader consultations with private entities, researchers and civil society organizations, among others.

Malaysia encourages those States with advanced space capabilities to continue sharing their expertise with other members of the international community, especially developing States. The sustainability of outer space activities is also a key element requiring our collective attention and action. Malaysia stands ready to work with all States in the interest of preserving outer space as a peaceful and secure global commons.

Mr. Dzonzi (Malawi): Malawi has a clear interest in working with its international partners to promote the responsible and peaceful use of outer space. That is because Malawi appreciates that the development of outer space technology holds immense potential to benefit both developed and developing countries and remains pivotal to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Like many least developed countries, Malawi relies on assured access to space-based systems and its applications to support its economic prosperity and maintain public safety.

Among many other important uses, space technologies are becoming increasingly vital to modern day disaster management activities, water resource management and climate change management. For instance, Earth observation satellites provide images that assist rapid mapping in all phases of the disaster management cycle: mitigation of potential risks in a given area, preparedness for eventual disasters, immediate response to a disaster event and subsequent recovery or reconstruction efforts.

Such technology was invaluable to Malawi when it was hit in 2015 by the worst-ever flood disaster in its history. The Office for Outer Space Affairs, through the World Food Programme in Malawi, activated the Charter of the United Nations and other mechanisms on outer space systems to download satellite images of the areas affected by the floods. With that information, Malawi was able to plan evacuation routes and access imagery to facilitate the initial impact assessment.

Malawi places great significance on the need for more international cooperation and the identification of new avenues and opportunities for the capacity-building of developing countries arising from the use of space science and technology for the welfare and security of their communities. Initiatives such as technical assistance and geospatial information-sharing will be vital in the achievement of the African Space Policy and Strategy adopted by the African Union in 2016.

To that end, it is worth mentioning that Malawi, as an agriculturally dependant country, has benefited greatly from the technical support and training provided by developed countries in space technology and the use of data collected by satellites. The United Nations Platform for Space-based Information for Disaster Management and Emergency Response and the United Nations Programme on Space Applications, with the support of the Government of Austria, visited Malawi in 2013. A great variety of topics were addressed, including remote-sensing applications for disaster risk management, land use planning for disaster prevention and the added value of satellite-derived soil moisture assessments, and those areas remain vital to our agriculture industry.

Malawi further notes with concern the threats to outer space and its applications resulting from rapid advances in space technology and ever-increasing human activities in outer space. The build-up of debris and space junk orbiting around the Earth, caused to

a large extent by unregulated and mismanaged space technology, poses a potential danger to sensitive space equipment and, more importantly, to the International Space Station. We also express our concern at the prospects of an arms race in space. The militarization of outer space is not compatible with international agreements on the use of outer space, let alone the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

For that reason, Malawi places great importance on the work of the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs, the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOUS) and the corresponding international protocols in protecting and preserving the planet and its environment.

In conclusion, Malawi affirms its belief in the principles and objectives that led to the establishment of COPUOUS in 1959 and that outer space is the common heritage of humankind. Therefore, there should be ways in which all States, in all fairness, can benefit from its exploration.

Mr. Kazi (Bangladesh): Bangladesh aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Malaysia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/73/PV.15) under this thematic cluster.

The ever-expanding use of space technology and services in our socioeconomic development efforts has raised the stakes for us in promoting the safety, security and long-term sustainability of outer space activities. We subscribe to the fundamental premise set out in the Outer Space Treaty that the exploration and use of outer space shall be carried out for the benefit and in the interests of all countries and shall be the province of all humankind.

Bangladesh has consistently advocated for the exploration and use of outer space for peaceful purposes and for the prevention of an arms race in outer space. In the Conference on Disarmament, we continue to underscore the importance of substantive discussions under the agenda item on the prevention of an arms race in outer space. We have flagged our support for commencing negotiations under an agreed programme of work on the prevention of placement of weapons in outer space and the threat or use of force against outer space objects.

In the same spirit, we continue to co-sponsor the draft resolution entitled "Prevention of an arms race in

outer space" in the First Committee. We take note of the ongoing work of the Group of Governmental Experts on the Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space, mandated by the Committee last year. We underscore the need for ensuring equitable representation of geographic regions and countries at different levels of development of space science and technological capabilities.

With our first communications satellite, Bangabandhu-1, launched into space earlier this year, we note with concern the increasing congestion, contention and competition in outer space and the resulting possibilities of compromising outer space security. We therefore stress the importance of developing a universal non-discriminatory, internationally legally binding instrument on the prevention of an arms race in outer space, building on the existing legal regime concerning disarmament, arms control and outer space use.

We share concerns about developments in the use of anti-ballistic missiles, in particular, which have increased the risk of the weaponization of outer space to the detriment of the interests of space actors and space users alike. Pursuant to its principled position, Bangladesh will commit to refraining from the first placement of weapons in outer space.

We recognize the critical importance of various transparency and confidence-building measures as complementary to, and not a substitute for, the existing international legal framework pertaining to outer space activities. We refer to the useful recommendations on potential transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities contained in the report (see A/68/189) of the Group of Governmental Experts established pursuant to resolution 65/68 as a useful basis for further work in that regard.

We stress that any codification initiative concerning outer space activities must be undertaken in a comprehensive and inclusive manner in order to take the various concerns on board, even while focusing on particular areas. In parallel with disarmament efforts in outer space, sustained attention and efforts should be focused on debris mitigation through effective international cooperation. In view of the alarming concentration of debris in outer space and the threat that it poses to space objects and activities, it is critical that meaningful initiatives be taken to tackle that challenge with the involvement of all States, ideally based on a common but differentiated approach.

Mr. Tituaña Matango (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, Ecuador aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/73/PV.15).

Ecuador has traditionally advocated for peaceful coexistence among all States in accordance with one of the founding principles of the United Nations, which also applies to the use of outer space and the need to ensure its peaceful use, while preventing its weaponization. We condemn the testing of anti-satellite weapons and the development of weapons placed in outer space.

My delegation supports all initiatives aimed at preventing the emergence of conflicts, endorses international instruments fostering the total elimination of weapons of mass destruction and is opposed to an arms race in outer space, owing to the devastating consequences that such a conflict would have for humankind. In that regard, we reaffirm our conviction of the need for a legally binding instrument that would preserve the peaceful character of outer space and promote confidence and transparency in that area.

Ecuador believes that an arms race in outer space would pose an extremely grave danger to international peace and security. Ecuador supports the need to ensure the peaceful use of outer space, while preventing the placement of weapons in outer space, as well as the latter's use for military purposes and the creation of so-called space forces. Outer space is the common heritage of humankind and we reject the assertion that it can in any way be considered as a new arena for war.

The Chair: I now give the floor to the observer of the Holy See.

Archbishop Auza (Holy See): The 1967 Outer Space Treaty, which entered into force only a decade after the first satellites were launched, is the bedrock agreement governing the vast outer space environment that extends trillions of kilometres in every direction. As stated in article I, the Treaty seeks to ensure that

“[t]he exploration and use of outer space, including the Moon and other celestial bodies, shall be carried out for the benefit and in the interests of all countries, irrespective of their degree of economic or scientific development, and shall be the province of all mankind”.

Article IV of the Treaty, which has thankfully stood the test of time, prohibits the orbiting and the placement

anywhere in outer space of nuclear or other weapons of mass destruction.

The interest in deploying systems in outer space that are designed to counter attacks using ballistic missiles remains active today and coincides with interests in deploying systems that are designed to attack and destroy satellites. The overlapping of such technologies points to the importance of initiating a global process aimed at the elimination of nuclear weapons. The use of outer space for monitoring activities on Earth has become immensely important.

The earliest arms control agreements depended explicitly on the so-called national technical means of verification. The importance of such means today is widely recognized as critical to the monitoring and verification of both nuclear arms reduction and elimination agreements, as well as multilateral undertakings such as the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

Accordingly, the Holy See welcomes the start earlier this year of work in the United Nations Disarmament Commission on transparency and confidence-building measures (TCBMs) for outer space. TCBMs are not a substitute for further legally binding undertakings governing activities in outer space that are designed to strengthen global stability and peace, but they can provide considerable support for achieving that objective.

In considering transparency in activities oriented towards military aspects of security in research and development of technologies, it is important that other States do not feel compelled to respond with competitive activities. With such transparency, States would have confidence that no one was progressing to the fielding of weapons systems – in other words, engaging in a sort of arms race.

In the 1970s, the United Nations discussed the possibility of establishing an international satellite monitoring agency. It is possible to return to that proposal and consider whether the time has come to bring such an agency into being in order to provide information on an open basis with regard to activities related to the launching of objects into space or directing energy at satellites and other objects in space. States could also agree to make known their launching sites for sending objects into outer space or for directing energy at objects or locations in outer space.

In order to build confidence among States in relation to the peaceful nature of activities in outer space, we could think about the presence at launch facilities of observers of States other than the launching States, which could announce the payloads that their launchers are carrying and allow the inspection of those payloads prior to launch. Attention should also be given to activities in the areas of ballistic missiles and ballistic-missile defence. An agreement stipulating that testing will not be carried out against objects in space would be another important confidence-building measure. States launching objects into space with the objective of approaching other satellites or space vehicles – either their own or others – should agree to provide prior notice of such actions.

Some or all of those measures could be converted into legally binding undertakings, further adding to stability and peace in outer space, if not also down below on Earth. The outer space environment could therefore remain one in which the objective of general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control is more nearly satisfied.

The full version of our statement will be made available on PaperSmart.

The Chair: We have heard the last speaker on the cluster “Outer space (disarmament aspects)”.

The Committee will now continue its consideration of the cluster “Conventional weapons”.

Mr. Al-Dobhany (Yemen) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to state that the League of Arab States aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/73/PV.14).

States members of the Arab League attach increased importance to countering the illicit trafficking and provision of small arms and light weapons, specifically with regard to their catastrophic humanitarian, security and economic implications. There has been an unprecedented increase in the illegal provision of small arms and light weapons in the Arab region. It would appear that certain Governments are providing terrorists and illegal armed groups with weapons to prolong armed conflicts and achieve ill-intentioned political goals that contravene the fundamental principles of international law, the Charter of the United Nations and relevant Security Council resolutions, in particular resolution 2370 (2017).

In that regard, the Arab League stresses the importance of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. It calls for the preservation of the Programme of Action as a consensus-based United Nations tool primarily aimed at building trust and enhancing cooperation among the countries of the world in order to eradicate illegal trafficking in small arms and light weapons.

However, any measure taken to that end must not infringe upon countries’ legitimate right to self-defence in accordance with the Charter and the right to import and manufacture conventional weapons for that purpose. The Arab League stresses the necessity to distinguish between combating the illicit trafficking and provision of weapons, which is the main goal of the Programme of Action, and imposing politicized or discriminatory constraints and monopolies on the trade of conventional weapons among Governments. It is up to Governments, within the purview of their sovereignty, to judge for themselves the security threats that they face. The Arab League calls for the respect of all prohibitions regarding the export of weapons to any given country in the absence of an official authorization from the importing country concerned.

The Arab countries therefore once again express their opposition to attempts to impose commitments related to treaties and mechanisms that are neither consensus-based nor universal. The Arab League stands by its conviction that the Programme of Action is a self-contained international framework whose implementation should not be hindered by any other international mechanism. In addition, any controversial issues that are not included in the Programme of Action should be avoided.

The Arab League underscores once again the importance of strengthening international cooperation and technical assistance in order to implement the Programme of Action and the international monitoring mechanism, including to support States’ capacities to apply relevant modern technologies and their capacity-building efforts, particularly in the area of ensuring their stockpiles and border control, without infringing upon their sovereignty or imposing conditions that run contrary to the spirit of the goals of the Programme of Action.

In addition, the Arab Group believes that providing assistance to any given country should not

entail a decrease in the official development assistance allocated to it, nor should the assistance needed to combat the illicit trafficking of conventional weapons be linked with the implementation of any of the Sustainable Development Goals other than target 16.4 on illegal arms flows.

In conclusion, the Arab League stresses that it is necessary to first fill the gaps that are hindering the efforts of the United Nations and multilateral partners to combat the illicit trafficking and provision of weapons before proceeding to address the issue of munitions. It is also imperative that a detailed study be carried out by relevant technical and legal experts so as to evaluate the technical, economic, security and legal ramifications of any resulting proposals that would involve the implementation of certain mechanisms and rules pertaining to weapons and munitions.

Mr. Dang (Viet Nam): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the 10 member States of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) — Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and my own country, Viet Nam.

ASEAN associates itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/73/PV.14).

ASEAN recognizes the serious consequences of the use of indiscriminate conventional weapons. We also recognize the increasing challenges presented by illicit conventional weapons and emerging technologies related to lethal weapons. Every year, more than 200,000 civilian casualties are caused by small arms in conflicts. We are very aware of the various effects of conventional weapons on women and children. The illegitimate use, manufacture, transfer and circulation of conventional weapons have major effects on innocent civilians' collective security and prosperity. ASEAN therefore welcomed the launch of the Secretary-General's Agenda for Disarmament, which sets out goals aimed at mitigating the humanitarian impact of conventional arms and addressing their illicit trade.

ASEAN also welcomed the further commitments made at the eighth Meeting of the States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions and the sixteenth Meeting of the State Parties to the Mine Ban Convention, and looks forward to the fifth Conference

of States Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty, to be held in Geneva in August 2019. We continue to support the implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and welcome the adoption of the 2018 outcome document (A/CONF.192/2018/RC/3, annex) of the third Review Conference of the Programme of Action.

In order to fully and effectively implement these international instruments, ASEAN stresses the importance of preserving and strengthening the roles of the relevant disarmament mechanisms, including the Conference on Disarmament, the United Nations Disarmament Commission (UNDC) and the First Committee. In that regard, we welcomed the successful adoption last year of UNDC's consensus recommendations on practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons. In addition, it is imperative that States parties further enhance their cooperation on the control and management of conventional weapons, including through capacity-building and the sharing of experiences. However, while States should implement their obligations under the relevant instruments, ASEAN reaffirms their sovereign right to acquire, manufacture, export, import and retain conventional arms, their parts and components for self-defence and security needs.

ASEAN attaches great importance to multilateral transparency and confidence-building measures related to the control of conventional weapons. Regionally, we have continued our commitment to addressing the issue of arms smuggling through ASEAN's Ministerial Meeting on Transnational Crime, the ASEAN Regional Forum and the annual meetings of ASEAN police chiefs. In addition to those mechanisms we have the ASEAN Forensic Science Institute, which supports the promotion of law-enforcement cooperation and the exchange of information on forensic investigations related to illicit arms. We are committed to adhering to international humanitarian law and continue to deplore the use of any explosive devices aimed at killing and terrorizing innocent civilians. The peoples represented by ASEAN are still adversely affected by indiscriminate weapons today, including existing anti-personnel mines, cluster munitions and other unexploded ordnance and explosive remnants of war. For that reason, we established the ASEAN Regional Mine Action Centre in cooperation with other regional

and international institutions to help affected ASEAN members to address the issue.

ASEAN would like to take this opportunity to call on all States, particularly developed countries, to provide the financial, technical and humanitarian assistance and cooperation needed to clear unexploded ordnance and explosive remnants of war and assist in the reintegration of their victims.

The Chair: I shall now call on those representatives who wish to speak in the exercise of the right of reply. In that connection, I would like to remind all delegations that the first intervention is limited to 10 minutes and the second to five minutes.

Mr. Belousov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I would like to exercise my right of reply with regard to the statement by the delegation of the United States under the cluster "Outer space (disarmament aspects). Frankly, the recent United States statements on the prevention of an arms race in outer space and ensuring the security of space activities are increasingly reminiscent of a touring theatre company putting on the same old hackneyed routines. There was a time when they received due attention and had some resonance. Today, however, with the passing of time, they are puzzling, even laughable. Of course, this would all be amusing if it was not so sad. The intransigent position of the United States on Russia's proposal for preventing an arms race in outer space is clearly not because the proposed measures are ineffective, unverifiable or unreliable. Quite the reverse. The significant efforts that the United States and its allies are making to discredit Russia's initiatives on outer space testify to how important, needed and timely they are.

The very fact that the initiative on no first placement of weapons in outer space is a major factor that has to be considered in the United States is a source of irritation in Washington, D.C. The negative United States response to the Russian-Chinese draft proposals on the prevention of the placement of weapons in outer space and of the threat or use of force against outer space objects is connected not to its shortcomings, but rather to the consequences that its adoption would have for the United States. Both initiatives throw a wrench into Washington's strategies because they run counter to the desire of the United States to achieve full and unconditional freedom of movement in outer space by ramping up its capacity to dominate. This was unambiguously stated by President Donald Trump on

23 March and Vice President Mike Pence on 23 August. We therefore now find ourselves in a situation in which any initiative or practical measure aimed at preventing an arms race in outer space will be either disregarded or harshly rejected by the United States, while advancing any pretext or argument, however improbable, as we heard earlier in the statement by the United States delegation.

Such was the concern expressed about the Russian satellite that had carried out manoeuvres that the United States did not understand, as well as about the functional purpose of that space object. I would like to point out first of all that other States participating in space activities, including the United States, and not just the Russian Federation, possess satellites that are capable of executing such manoeuvres. They regularly carry out manoeuvres to correct their orbits or to avoid colliding with or coming dangerously close to other space objects. With regard to the Russian satellite's purpose, in accordance with the Convention on Registration of Objects Launched into Outer Space, Russia provided the relevant information following the satellite's launch into orbit. In that regard, we would like to point to the obnoxious United States practice for registering its space objects. Incidentally, its near-Earth orbit objects number more than 800, and in the next few years it plans to increase that number significantly. The United States continues to obstinately register all its satellites as intended for either meteorological or communications purposes. That raises many questions with regard to the genuine purposes of all those powerful satellites and groupings, whose total is more than five and half times larger than Russia's. If we could have a look through the United States doctrine documents, we might conclude that at least some of those satellites are actually intended to subject other States' outer space objects to force. With the blessing of the international community for taking offensive action in outer space at its own discretion, between 2012 and 2015 the United States took an active part in drafting the International Code of Conduct for Outer Space.

Furthermore, on the way to developing its global anti-ballistic-missile defence system, the United States has also been stepping up its anti-satellite capability. Independent experts analysing the potential of the United States anti-missile defence system have come to the conclusion that missiles intended to intercept ballistic missiles are also capable of destroying satellites, particularly since the system's capacity can

be significantly ramped up, including by fine-tuning its means of interception. That means that the United States possesses the requisite scientific, technical and production capacities to make that anti-ballistic-missile system multipurpose. The United States anti-satellite capabilities were already partially demonstrated in 2008, when it downed one of its own satellites that had left orbit. The increased anti-satellite capability was confirmed by the 2019 budget proposal for the military, which earmarked resources for the establishment of an outer-space attack system by 2030. And although the representative of the United States has attempted to deny the intended purposes of those budget items, its own facts tell a different story. A fact is still a fact. In 2030, despite the efforts of the Russian Federation and other like-minded countries, weapons will be placed in outer space.

We are also very concerned about the desire of the United States to impose on the international community its approaches to governing outer-space activity and specifically to force participants to implement their space programmes according to United States laws, as a United States directive on space traffic management published in August clearly shows. It seems that is only the first swallow that the international community will encounter in the flocks of so-called assurance initiatives of the United States winging their way in the area of outer-space security. We oppose such unilateral approaches and advocate for developing mechanisms governing space activities at the multilateral level, reflecting the proposals and interests of all States.

Mr. Hallak (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): Despite the fact that the British representative does not deserve a reply, I would advise him and his Government to allow the people of Scotland to exercise their right to self-determination, refrain from falsifying the referendum once again and let Britain take care of its own internal affairs instead of poking its nose into those of others. Britain must apologize to the Iraqi people for invading Iraq in 2003, bring Tony Blair to justice and compensate the people of Iraq for the destruction of their country.

It is clear that Britain is in breach of article IX of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), which among other things calls on States parties to the Convention to engage in consultations. As all the members of the First Committee know, however, Britain has refused to consult and cooperate with the Russian Federation. What happened in Salisbury confirmed that many

Western States, including Britain and the United States, have clandestine capabilities for developing chemical weapons. It would be difficult otherwise to find a logical explanation for their refusal to provide information to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) over the past 20 years that would have enabled the OPCW Technical Secretariat to carry out verification activities based on the CWC with regard to the possible production of the Novichok nerve agent. It seems that Britain is trying to hide such clandestine capabilities when it should be providing the OPCW with all the relevant information on the issue. Britain, which helped to stage certain fabricated chemical events in Syria, is now trying to accuse others of wrongdoing in order to hide its violations of the CWC.

With regard to what the United States representative said, we all know that successive United States Administrations have been involved in training terrorists from Da'esh and the Al-Nusra Front, as well as other terrorist groups, in handling and using chemical substances. That is a fact that none of the United States representatives can deny. In addition, the United States Administration officially and openly finances terrorists from the White Helmets group, the main executive arm of the Al-Nusra Front, which is part of Al-Qaida. The United States representative cannot deny his country's involvement with regard to those true facts, which can be found in the words of former United States Administration officials. We have notified the Security Council, the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1540 (2004) and the Counter-Terrorism Committees of the continued involvement of the United States in facilitating the possession by terrorist groups of chemical substances and training them in using those substances against civilians with a view to laying the blame on the Syrian Government.

With regard to the comments of the representative of France, I would advise him to take another look at the CWC, because the June decision runs contrary to CWC provisions and is entirely illegitimate. The decision confers on the OPCW prerogatives that are not authorized by the Convention. For several reasons, the Executive Council did not adopt the draft decision pertaining to the 2019 programme budget because it includes an item on financing the so-called mechanism, which was established by that decision for determining liabilities.

All attempts by the representative of France to alter the facts regarding the incompatibility of the resolution with the CWC will be in vain. The ridiculous attempts by the representative of France to convince other Member States here that his country is not involved in supporting, sponsoring and financing terrorism are also useless because we all know that France has used its funds, media, intelligence services and expertise to provide terrorists in Syria with arms, equipment and munitions, especially with toxic chemical substances.

It is ironic that the representative of France has accused Syria, while France, through former Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius, has fabricated the use of toxic chemical substance in eastern Ghouta in the countryside of Damascus in August 2013. Those facts were documented in the book *Les Chemins de Damas*, by French journalists Christian Chesnot and Georges Malbrunot. I call on all Committee members to read that book. In 2012, a senior French official said that jihadists in Syria were doing a good job but that they would be viewed as terrorists if they were to return to France.

All Committee members know that the Turkish regime is involved in facilitating the transfer and smuggling of toxic chemicals to terrorist groups in Syria. Turkey also cooperates with the United States to train terrorists in Turkey on toxic chemicals, in particular in Gaziantep. Although the representative of the Turkish regime denies it, all Committee members are aware that the Turkish regime oversees and manages terrorist groups of Da'esh, Al-Nusra Front and others and that the Turkish regime is one of the entities that fabricates theatrical chemical attacks in Syria, with the coordination of Britain, the United States and France.

I have a piece of information I would like to share with the First Committee, although I realize that I have exceeded my time limit. Just a few days ago, on 18 October, there was a huge explosion in a factory used to manufacture explosives in Idlib, specifically in the village of Turmanin located 15 kilometres from the Turkish border. The factory was managed by Turkish, British and Chechen experts and contained huge quantities of fertilizer and liquefied chlorine.

Based on the information available to us, it has been confirmed that nine foreign experts and two White Helmets were killed. Following the explosion, which was the result of a human technical error, the Al-Nusra Front surrounded the area. We would like to note that

elements of the Al-Nusra Front cooperated with the White Helmets to transfer some of the materials from that factory to other places.

Mr. Wood (United States of America): I take the floor to respond to comments made by the representative of the Russian Federation with regard to outer space issues.

For many years now, the United States delegation has said that the proposed draft treaty on the prevention of the placement of weapons in outer space and of the threat or use of force against outer space objects is seriously and fundamentally flawed. It is not equitable, is not effectively verifiable and is not in the interest of the United States or its allied partners. I think that the Russian delegation and Russia in general have been hyper-aggressive, in particular of late, with regard to the country's space initiatives. It is simply because countries have become wise to Russia's intent and pronouncements that run counter to its so-called goals in the draft treaty.

Russia is without question preparing to fight a war in space, while at the same time promoting a flawed treaty that runs counter to Russian policy. Russia is producing terrestrial anti-satellite weaponry. The draft treaty does not address the issue of anti-satellite technology. Russia's reasons for not including that issue in the treaty do not stand the test of plausibility. As my President and Vice-President have said, while the United States would prefer that the space domain remain free of conflict, we will prepare to meet and overcome any challenges that arise. That is the reality. I would say to my Russian colleagues that their draft treaty is losing steam and is fundamentally flawed and they need to go back to the drawing board.

With regard to the comments made by the Syrian representative, all I can say is that he continues to fabricate ridiculous charges against the United States and other countries. However, he and the Syrian regime will never be able to convince the international community of its innocence of the crimes committed against its own people through the use of chemical weapons. My final point is that the Syrian regime and its collaborators will be held accountable for the crimes committed against the Syrian people.

Mr. Liddle (United Kingdom): Since the Syrian representative has been kind enough to give me a reply I did not deserve, it would be impolite not to reciprocate.

I said this morning that Syria was desperate to deflect attention by misrepresenting and undermining the process and institutions whose role is to defend the norm against the use of chemical weapons, as well as by throwing around random and unsubstantiated accusations unrelated to the matter at hand. The Syrian representative has been kind enough to illustrate my point perfectly.

Amid the obfuscation, let us keep focused on one clear fact — Syria has used chemical weapons against its own people and is in breach of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Mr. Hwang (France) (*spoke in French*): I hope to be the last speaker for today. I would like to exercise my right of reply to respond to the Syrian representative. I will be very brief because the comments by the Syrian representative are simply ludicrous — just ridiculous. Such remarks do not deceive anyone in the room. I have nothing more to say so as not to waste any more of the Committee's time.

Mr. Hallak (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): I will try to be brief.

I would like to pose the following questions to those States that adhere to the Charter of the United Nations.

What would make Syria use internationally banned weapons that it does not possess? That would make no real military sense and serve only to enable the three aggressors to launch one aggression after another against Syria.

How could the Governments of those three aggressor States possibly predict the place, date and type of chemical weapons used in Syria? How could those Governments cooperate with terrorists affiliated with the Al-Nusra Front and the White Helmets and miraculously manage to predict such things?

Why do such chemical weapons harm only women and children and never terrorists?

Why is it that the Security Council and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons

cannot process the information, provided by the Syrian Government in more than 160 official letters over the past few years, concerning the possession by armed terrorist groups in Syria of toxic chemical substances that they stockpile and use against civilians in order to level accusations against the Syrian Arab Army?

We all know that British intelligence set up the White Helmets terrorist group and that it uses them to stage events over and over again. We have already said that we are in possession of recordings that prove the involvement of Britain in spurring White Helmets terrorists to stage the chemical incident that they claim occurred in Douma.

United States Administrations are responsible for creating, financing and sponsoring several terrorist groups, such as Al-Qaida in the 1980s, Da'esh and Al-Nusra Front. Senior officials of former United States Administration, including Mrs. Clinton, have publicly stated — members of the Committee can check her statement as there are video recordings of it — that the United States was behind the creation of those groups. In addition, the ruling authorities in Washington now use those terrorist groups as part of their foreign policy.

As to the French representative, his country is involved in chemical incidents in Syria whether he likes it or not. The illegitimate international coalition has used internationally banned weapons, such as white phosphorus, against Syrian civilians. We are here to say that we will punish them for that.

The Chair: The next meeting of the Committee will be held tomorrow, Thursday 25 October, at 10 a.m. sharp, in Conference Room 4. The Committee will continue its thematic discussion of the cluster "Conventional weapons". I remind delegations that tomorrow's meeting will be suspended at 12.30 p.m. in order to follow the annual tradition of accommodating the presentation ceremony of the United Nations Disarmament Fellowship certificates.

The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.