



General Assembly

Seventy-third session

First Committee

23rd meeting

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New York

Official Records

Chair: Mr. Jinga (Romania)

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

Agenda items 93 to 108 (continued)

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

The Chair (*spoke in French*): There remain 36 speakers on the list for the cluster “Regional disarmament and security”. However, in accordance with its adopted timetable, before continuing with the list of speakers, the Committee will first hear from a panel under the cluster “Disarmament machinery”.

It is now my pleasure to extend a warm welcome to our panellists for this afternoon. They are Mr. Rauf Alp Denктаş, who will make a statement on behalf of Ms. Beliz Celasin Rende of Turkey, President of the Conference on Disarmament; Ms. Gillian Bird, Chair of the United Nations Disarmament Commission and Permanent Representative of Australia to the United Nations; Mr. Vladimir Drobnjak, Chair of the Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters and Permanent Representative of Croatia to the United Nations; and Ms. Renata Dwan, Director of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research.

The report of the Conference on Disarmament is contained in document A/73/27; the report of the Disarmament Commission for 2018 has been issued as document A/73/42; and the report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters is contained in document

A/73/259. Finally, the note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Director of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research is contained in document A/73/256.

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

I now give the floor to Mr. Denктаş.

Mr. Denктаş (Turkey), President, Conference on Disarmament: On behalf of Ms. Beliz Celasin Rende, my colleague in Geneva who is the last President of the Conference on Disarmament (CD) at its 2018 session, I wish to start by thanking the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs for inviting the Republic of Turkey to participate in today’s panel in that capacity.

As the single multilateral disarmament platform, with its unique structure among international forums and its special mandate of negotiating legally binding disarmament instruments, the Conference on Disarmament has since its foundation been at the centre of efforts to render our world a safer place. However, undoubtedly, there are also questions over the CD’s ability to perform its negotiating mandate.

The 2018 session was indeed not an easy one for the Conference. Following the adoption of the CD agenda, a consensus over a programme of work did not emerge. Eventually, after some hard work, on 14 September the

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Conference adopted a technical report. However, very important and positive steps were taken at the CD this year. I would like to summarize those steps as follows.

First, throughout the year, with great encouragement on the part of the Secretary-General, there was considerable motivation to advance the international disarmament agenda. In line with that positive spirit, the Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva invited the 2018 Presidents of the CD to consultations before the beginning of the session. At those meetings, Mr. Møller conveyed the Secretary-General's, and his own, personal readiness to facilitate the work of the Conference. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Secretary-General and Mr. Møller for their efforts to advance the work of the CD.

Subsequently, Conference members made a promising start under the guidance of the Sri Lankan Ambassador, His Excellency Mr. Ravinatha Aryasinha, and a decision was adopted on the establishment of five subsidiary bodies in accordance with the agenda of the Conference. Four subsidiary bodies were established on agenda items 1 to 4 and one on agenda items 5, 6 and 7. Those bodies were given the following three main responsibilities: first, to reach an understanding on the areas of commonalities in the CD by taking into account all relevant views and proposals, past, present and future; secondly, to deepen technical discussions on broadening areas of agreement, including through the participation of relevant experts; and thirdly, to consider effective measures, including legal instruments, for negotiations. It was also agreed that the reports on the progress achieved and agreed in each subsidiary body would be submitted to the Conference.

Following the high-level segment, during which the Secretary-General also addressed the Conference, the Conference appointed coordinators to the subsidiary bodies and set a timetable for the meetings. We would like to once again thank the Ambassadors of Indonesia, the Netherlands, Brazil, Germany and Belarus — and their teams, of course — for the hard work they have put into the subsidiary bodies.

Seven meetings were held by each subsidiary body. In the end, they all submitted their substantive reports to the Conference, and four of them were adopted. The report of the fourth body, on negative security assurances, was not. However, I am confident that at the next session of the Conference we will further

develop the work on negative security assurances, which is a very important topic for many delegations and will close the so-called gap between the agenda items of the CD.

It is also worth underlining that the meetings of the subsidiary bodies and their reports provide us with the possibility of better understanding the converging and also the diverging positions of the delegations on different topics. They certainly constitute a solid basis for the future work of the Conference.

As is known, one of the important responsibilities of the last President of the Conference on Disarmament is to prepare the report of the Conference to the General Assembly. Aware of the circumstances — the impossible, controversial issues facing the 2018 session — the Permanent Mission of Turkey in Geneva began consultations with delegations two weeks ahead of our presidency, which commenced on 20 August. The goal was to produce a factual and objective annual report in an impartial and transparent manner. In line with the views and expectations of delegations, as well as common past practices, the first draft of the CD report was circulated on the first day of the Turkish presidency.

Although it was possible provisionally to adopt the majority of the paragraphs, there were intensive and lengthy negotiations on how to reflect in the annual report the presidency of one delegation during the 2018 session and the reports of the subsidiary bodies. At the end of nine formal plenaries, 12 informal plenaries and dozens of bilateral consultations and groups of small meetings over the course of four weeks, the Conference adopted a technical and procedural report. In the aftermath, discussions of a similar nature took place during the informal meetings held on the draft resolution on the report of the CD. At the end of five informal meetings, delegations managed to agree on the draft resolution in Geneva.

We would like to thank all CD members for the enormous efforts they exerted to advance the work of the CD from the beginning of the session. We would also like to thank the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs for its valuable support. We hope the incremental steps taken this year will be helpful in our future work. As members know, the Conference will resume its work in 2019. We believe that the most essential issue next year will be maintaining the relevance of the Conference. In that regard, Turkey

stands ready to use the intersessional period and is available to hold consultations with the incoming presidency, if that is deemed necessary.

Overall, I wish to conclude by expressing the fact that we appreciate this opportunity to present to the Committee the report of the CD.

The Chair: I now invite Ms. Bird to address the Committee.

Ms. Bird (Australia), United Nations Disarmament Commission: It was my privilege to serve as Chair of the United Nations Disarmament Commission (UNDC) this year. It was a particularly important year for the Committee, as it was the first year of the UNDC's three-year cycle. The UNDC indeed operates on a three-year cycle. It was particularly important as well because we were coming off the back of a successful outcome to the previous three-year cycle. The year 2017 marked the first agreed UNDC outcome achieved since 1991. Following on from that success, we were very keen to ensure that we got the new three-year cycle off to a good start.

My priority as Chair was helping to guide and work with States parties towards a continued, constructive and cooperative dialogue, which had marked the previous three-year cycle and the breakthrough of reaching an outcome. I am pleased to say that the hard work of all delegations during our session in April paid off. I believe we have set the UNDC on the best possible path towards — I hope — repeating the 2017 success in 2020.

One way we managed to have a successful start was by adopting the UNDC agenda in the shortest time since 2006. That might sound like a small achievement, but when there is only a three-week session, adopting the agenda on day one — which is what we managed to do and is fairly unprecedented — meant that we had three full weeks for our substantive discussions. We managed to reach agreement on the agenda by holding informal consultations in the lead-up to the first meeting. I thank all delegations, whose cooperation allowed us to adopt the agenda on day one. As I said, we had the full three weeks for substantive discussions.

Looking ahead, the current UNDC cycle is particularly important. Given that it is a three-year cycle, we need to acknowledge that it will complete its cycle shortly before the tenth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear

Weapons (NPT). We know that the next NPT Review Conference will be challenging, but we think that, if we can continue the constructive and cooperative spirit, the UNDC will help us enter that Review Conference in the best possible shape.

In addition to adopting our agenda in 2018, we managed to successfully launch the two Working Groups. Both of them had a good solid start, with two excellent and experienced Chairs. I am also pleased to note that we managed to achieve perfect gender balance in the election of the two Chairs.

Working Group I was chaired by the Deputy Permanent Representative of Jamaica, Mrs. Diedre Mills, and addressed nuclear risk reduction. As Committee members know, Working Group I has always had a nuclear focus, and the topic chosen for that Group is indeed nuclear risk reduction. We think it is a very useful topic that has not been fully examined in disarmament forums but is likely to receive a great deal of focus in the 2020 Review Conference. Having the UNDC work on that issue over its three-year cycle can — I hope — make a very constructive contribution to discourse on that issue at the Review Conference. Working Group I will carry into next year's session a Chair's paper that incorporates a range of views as the basis for further discussions on nuclear risk reduction. If we look back to the successes enjoyed by the UNDC in the 1980s and 1990s, one of the common threads was a focused approach. I would urge all States parties to bear that in mind when we reconvene next year.

Working Group II was chaired by Mr. Jeroen Cooreman of Belgium. It addressed outer space transparency and confidence-building measures. I was pleased that we agreed on that topic. The discussions in Working Group II were more general than those of Working Group I, which is perhaps unsurprising given that the topic was related to outer space, which is more of a focus for the work in Vienna than it is here in New York. But I think that participants found it very useful, given the lack of specific technical expertise in the field, to begin the discussions here in New York. I think it will be important going forward that we all draw on the expertise we have in Vienna on that issue. That Group also agreed to take a Chair's paper into 2019, which has an agreed structure and headings. I am confident that the UNDC will start to fill that document with objectives, principles and recommendations at the next session.

One failure to report is the attempt I made as Chair to change the date of the UNDC session. We had proposed bringing it forward, from April to February. We thought that it was a less crowded part of the disarmament calendar and would give delegations a little bit more time to engage and a bit more time, come 2020, between that meeting and the session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2020 Review Conference of the Parties to the NPT. But, for a number of reasons, that was not possible. I am still confident that the UNDC is well positioned to have a productive and successful 2019 session next April. We are certainly already on a path towards a further, deeper substantive discourse on those two important issues: nuclear risk reduction and outer space and transparency and confidence-building measures, both of which are very important in the current disarmament landscape.

I thank Committee members for all their trust and confidence in me as UNDC Chair and for their constructive approach. I wish the incoming Chair, whomever he or she may be, all the best for a successful 2019 session, which, again, will be the mid-year of the three-year cycle.

The Chair: I now invite Mr. Drobnyak to address the Committee.

Mr. Drobnyak (Croatia), Chair, Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters: I have the pleasure to brief the First Committee on the work of the Secretary-General's Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters (ABDM) for the year 2018. As the Committee is aware, the members of the Board also act as the trustees of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR), but I have already briefed the First Committee on that matter. I will therefore limit my remarks to the work of the ABDM. As has already been mentioned, the report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Board is contained in document A/73/259, published on 26 July.

With regard to the substantive issues on the Board's agenda, the Secretary-General set out two main items for the Board to consider at its first session in 2018, which took place in Geneva. The first sought to contribute to the development of the Secretary-General's agenda for disarmament by deliberating on strategic priorities with respect to disarmament and non-proliferation. The second item explored the current developments in science and technology and their potential impact on international security and disarmament.

With regard to the first item, the Board commended the Secretary-General's initiative to develop a disarmament agenda. Well aware of the vigorous reform efforts that the Secretary-General is undertaking with respect to the peace and security pillars, the Board noted that disarmament should be accorded equally high priority. We welcomed a disarmament agenda that would include items that are actionable, realistic, achievable and important to every Member State.

The Board believed that a dynamic set of disarmament priorities could strongly contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and be of considerable value in the areas of conflict prevention and humanitarian action. The Board expressed hope that bringing renewed momentum to disarmament would encourage Member States to move toward risk-reduction measures and revitalize much-needed cooperation and trust-building. The Board's deliberations during its first session of 2018 contributed to the development of the Secretary-General's disarmament initiative, entitled *Securing Our Common Future — An Agenda for Disarmament*, which the Secretary-General launched on 24 May at the University of Geneva.

With respect to the second item, which was to explore current developments in science and technology and their potential impact on international security and disarmament, two common themes were considered by the Board to be of grave concern. First, developments in frontier areas are outpacing efforts to agree on norms or regulations. Secondly, significant moral, legal and ethical ambiguities arise when certain technologies are weaponized, such as nanotechnologies, electromagnetic and hypersonic weapons, armed unmanned aerial vehicles and developments in biology and chemistry.

The issue of new technologies is also discussed in the Secretary-General's Agenda for Disarmament — in part IV, entitled "Disarmament for future generations", in which emerging means and methods of warfare are examined. The Board noted that, while technology provided overwhelming benefits, new weapon technologies pose challenges to existing legal, humanitarian and ethical norms, non-proliferation, international stability and peace and security. In the face of the growing automation of weaponry, new measures were necessary to ensure that humans always maintain control over the use of force. A culture of accountability and adherence to norms, rules and

principles needed to be fostered for responsible behaviour in cyberspace, and greater steps needed to be taken to encourage responsible innovation by industry, engineers and scientists.

Finally, let me inform the Committee that the Board proposed in its report to the Secretary-General a total of 41 key points and recommendations. Last, but certainly not least, in the Board's opinion, UNIDIR has an increasing role to play and should be used more often. I stand ready to elaborate on the Board's work in detail, if need be.

The Chair: I now invite Ms. Dwan to address the Committee.

Ms. Dwan (Director, United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research): It is a pleasure to join the First Committee today. As this is the third time I join the Committee, and the third meeting of what is a long week, I have a PowerPoint presentation to make my statement a bit livelier. I will also try to keep it short.

It is my pleasure to brief the Committee today on the annual report of the Director of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) (see A/73/256). In that report, we articulate the vision of UNIDIR and its key functions, which are summarized as knowledge, ideas, dialogue and advice to support progress on disarmament.

The report briefly outlines the key areas of UNIDIR's work, which were approved in June this year by the Board of Trustees, as a three-year research agenda oriented around four pillars of our work. I point out in particular that the goal within each of those areas is to seek not so much to build bridges but to facilitate linkages among themes and other dimensions outside the multilateral processes within the United Nations. Some of those themes are at the heart of the Committee's deliberations, such as conflict prevention, the Sustainable Development Goals and how arms control can support some of those aspects and areas. The Committee will see that gender and disarmament now constitute a specific UNIDIR programme.

Moving onto our key activities over the course of the reporting period, the Committee will note that we undertook 38 research projects, carried out 45 events in 34 locations around the world, published 40 reports, briefing notes and papers and — as the speakers before me, Ambassador Drobnjak in particular, mentioned—

oriented and engaged heavily in the development of the Secretary-General's Agenda for Disarmament.

In addition to more research-oriented work, we provide briefings, dialogue and support, including to all subsidiary bodies of the Conference on Disarmament, serving as technical consultants for a number of groups of governmental experts and hosting a range of conferences, the two largest being our annual Space Security Conference and the Cyberstability Conference. The report before the Committee outlines in greater depth some of those key issues, but I would like to flag just a couple of themes that reflect highlights of the past year.

In terms of our support to knowledge, which we really see as fulfilling our mandate to promote the informed participation of all Member States in disarmament processes, we published a range of primers on complex new themes, with a view to supporting Member States as they come to negotiate and debate those issues in multilateral forums. Ahead of the meetings on the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and of the Group of Governmental Experts on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems, we issued a series of primers, including on artificial intelligence and the weaponization of increasingly autonomous technologies. All of those publications are available free of charge and are downloadable from our website. In the context of our programme of action and the work on conventional weapons, we issued a handbook identifying options for reporting synergies across conventional arms treaties and instruments so as to help Member States think about how they can minimize their reporting and facilitate their reporting burdens.

In the context of trying to support and propose new ideas and facilitate new thinking on older issues, we did some pioneering work over the course of the past year, on nuclear-weapons verification, turning verification on its head, so to speak, with proposals for deferred verification and verifying the absence of nuclear weapons. We ran a series of side events in meetings of the Preparatory Committee for the 2020 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and during First Committee side events this year. With regard to outer space, we published a series of dossiers on various dimensions and aspects of the changing nature of space security, including the proposals around guidelines for anti-satellite testing.

Moving to the dialogue activities we undertook in trying to take advantage of our role as an autonomous institution within the United Nations framework, I mentioned our annual conferences. More than 160 participants from delegations from all around the world attended our Cyberstability Conference this year. It focused in particular on the role of the private sector and the importance of dialogue with multi-stakeholders in addressing cyberthreats.

The Committee is familiar with the International Gender Champions Disarmament Impact Group, which UNIDIR initiated, together with the Governments of Ireland and Namibia. It has held some launch events and side events here during this session of the Committee. We have had further engagement with the private sector, in particular in the area of diversion, with a series of informal expert meetings and workshops taking place in Geneva and elsewhere.

In the context of providing technical advisory and capacity support, when requested by Member States and Member States bodies, we are currently supporting the Group of Governmental Experts on the Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space, together with the Governmental Experts on Nuclear Disarmament Verification.

West Africa, together with the Economic Community of West African States, is undertaking significant work to support countries that are keen to establish national policy frameworks for the management of weapons and ammunition in that part of the world. We have also played a role in supporting the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 2127 (2013), concerning the Central African Republic, in exploring benchmarks to assess the impact of the arms embargo and possible criteria for its lifting.

The Secretary-General's Agenda for Disarmament, mentioned by previous speakers, foresees a significant role for UNIDIR across multiple areas. I will not go into them here now; we discussed it at a previous occasion during the First Committee, on 25 October, but we are happy to mention that, over the course of the summer, for its part, UNIDIR undertook an initiative to bring together all the multiple actors and non-governmental organizations in Geneva, together with the Office for Disarmament Affairs, to facilitate a series of dialogues there on the Agenda. We look forward to continuing the discussion in that space.

As the report of the Director is also an occasion to report to Member States on the financial status of UNIDIR and the financial accounts that are certified by the Comptroller, it is also important for me to outline the current financial situation and our work. As members will have seen in the report, 91 per cent of our income is reliant on voluntary funds. Five Member States provide 75 per cent of all contributions, and the bulk of those funds are earmarked in time and on specific projects. With regard to where we are today, notwithstanding the expansion in our activities over the course of the past year, we are seeing, as of now in October, a significant decrease in the number of donors, which may be owing to Member States thinking about and facilitating their year-end productions. In any case, it is a factor. There is also the criterion of total revenue, which is currently lower than at the same time last year.

Member States already had a significant discussion on the independent assessment of UNIDIR's financial and operating model requested by the General Assembly, now available in document A/73/284. They also had an opportunity to look at the key recommendations by the Secretary-General, which drew on the independent assessment, including recommendations to UNIDIR and Member States, as well as the Secretariat. They are outlined on the current slide, but I will be happy to discuss them during our discussion.

Where are we right now? I would like to use this opportunity to express my heartfelt thanks for members' facilitation of my assumption of this role, as of March. I have very much appreciated the welcome and support of colleagues in Geneva and New York, and express support for those donors that have provided funds to UNIDIR over the past year. I would like to draw particular attention to those Member States that provided contributions to the core operating budget of UNIDIR, which is non-earmarked and therefore helps us fund our runnings costs. To those countries whose names appear in bold type on the slide, I particularly would like to express my thanks.

I especially thank those brave souls who have already sought to facilitate the implementation of the recommendations of the Secretary-General, building on the independent assessment, with a view to providing new modalities for funding. In particular, I would like to thank Sweden for being the first to explore softly earmarked funding support, and Norway and Switzerland for providing multi-year programmatic funding. I know that many Members are discussing with

us possible support in that direction. I thank them for that engagement and hope that our Swedish, Norwegian and Swiss colleagues will be sources of inspiration and information in that regard.

What are our next steps for 2019? We are excited about the fact that we have a three-year research agenda. It is one of the findings of the independent assessment that UNIDIR needs a more transparent, visible and forward-looking research agenda. We are excited that we have that agenda in place and approved by our Board. Taking that forward will be a key issue for us in the year ahead.

We are proud and excited to be affiliated and engaged with Secretary-General's Agenda for Disarmament and seek to work closely with the whole range of United Nations actors that are involved in that exercise over the course of the coming year. In the face of the busy disarmament calendar ahead, we are particularly engaged in the continued support for the Conference on Disarmament, to the extent that our financial situation permits, as well as for groups of governmental experts and key multilateral processes, in particular the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, the Mine-Ban Convention and others. We tend to orient our side events and publications around those key events with a view to facilitating, we hope, members' participation and engagement.

We are also seeking to innovate, and we recognize that we need to change and continue to develop the services we provide, in particular to a broader range of Member States. One of the conclusions of the independent assessment is that UNIDIR has not been as visible as it could be. Its profile and engagement, especially outside Geneva, could use strengthening. We have taken that on board, have appointed a communications officer and are very keen to be more present and engaged with Member States and the disarmament-expert communities throughout the world, which is a key area for us in looking forward.

The second point on the slide involves building partnerships and diversity. UNIDIR is, and will remain, small, but its strength lies in its ability to work with a range of partners within the United Nations and regional bodies, and in particular with expert communities across the globe. We seek to build on that. The report of the Secretary-General mentions visiting research fellows and the possibility of partnerships with a more

diverse community of experts. We believe that would be of benefit to the entire disarmament community, in Geneva and New York.

The third point concerns putting in place a sustainable funding and operating structure. One might think that it is not an innovation, as it is a challenge that has faced UNIDIR since 1984, but it is certainly one to which we will be devoting renewed energy and attention. I welcome members' ideas and thoughts as to how we might best achieve that goal.

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

The meeting was suspended at 3.50 p.m. and resumed at 4.05 p.m.

The Chair: The Committee will now continue its consideration of the cluster "Regional disarmament and security". Delegations are kindly reminded to observe the established time limits.

Mr. Soemirat (Indonesia): I am honoured to speak on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (NAM).

NAM strongly supports the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East. As a priority step to that end, NAM reaffirms the need for the speedy establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East in accordance with Security Council resolution 487 (1981), paragraph 14 of Security Council resolution 687 (1991) and the relevant General Assembly resolutions adopted by consensus.

NAM reaffirms the urgent need for the convening of a conference of all States of the region under the auspices of the United Nations to negotiate a legally binding treaty on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. Pending its establishment, NAM demands that Israel — the only country in the region that has not joined the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), or declared its intention to do so — renounce any possession of nuclear weapons, accede to the NPT without any precondition or further delay and promptly place all its nuclear facilities under the full-scope safeguards of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

NAM expresses great concern about the acquisition of nuclear capability by Israel, which poses a serious and continuing threat to the security of neighbouring and other States, and condemns Israel for continuing to develop and stockpile nuclear arsenals. The Movement also calls for the total and complete prohibition of the transfer to Israel of all nuclear-related equipment, information, material, facilities, resources, devices and the extension of assistance in the nuclear-related scientific or technological fields.

NAM States parties to the NPT reiterate their serious concern about the two-decade delay in the implementation of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East, and urge the sponsors of the resolution to take all the necessary measures to fully implement it without further delay. NAM States parties to the NPT reiterate their profound disappointment that the 2010 Action Plan on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction has not been implemented. They strongly reject the alleged impediments to implementing the 2010 Action plan on the Middle East and the 1995 resolution on the Middle East. They run contrary to the letter and spirit of the 1995 resolution, which constitutes the original terms of reference of establishing that zone, and violate the collective agreement reached at the 2010 NPT Review Conference.

Stability cannot be achieved in a region where massive imbalances in military capabilities are maintained, particularly through the possession of nuclear weapons, which allow one party to threaten its neighbours and the region.

Recalling the opposition expressed by the United States, the United Kingdom and Canada at the concluding meeting of the 2015 NPT Review Conference, NAM States parties to the NPT express their disappointment at the fact that, as the result of such opposition, a consensus on new measures regarding the process to establish a Middle East as a zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction was not achieved. That could undermine efforts towards strengthening the NPT regime as a whole.

NAM re-emphasizes the special responsibility of the sponsor States of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East in the implementation of that resolution. NAM is concerned that the persistent lack of the implementation of the 1995 resolution, contrary to the decisions taken at the relevant NPT Review Conference, undermines the

effectiveness and credibility of the NPT and disrupts the delicate balance across its three pillars, taking into account that the indefinite extension of the Treaty, agreed at the 1995 Review and Extension Conference, is inextricably linked to the implementation of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East.

NAM reiterates its deep concern about the increasing resort to unilateralism and, in that context, underlines that multilateralism and multilaterally agreed solutions, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, provide the only sustainable method of addressing disarmament and international security issues. NAM also underscores its principled position concerning the non-use or threat of use of force against the territorial integrity of any State.

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

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

NAM urges States to conclude agreements freely arrived at among the States of the region concerned with a view to establishing new nuclear-weapon-free zones in regions where they do not exist, in accordance with the provisions of the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (resolution (S-10/2)) and the principles and

guidelines adopted by the United Nations Disarmament Commission in 1999.

In conclusion, NAM emphasizes the importance of United Nations activities at the regional level to increase the stability and security of its Member States, which could be promoted in a substantive manner by the maintenance and revitalization of the three Regional Centres for Peace and Disarmament.

Mr. Penaranda (Philippines): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the States members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and my own country, the Philippines.

ASEAN reiterates the importance of strengthening international cooperative efforts in nuclear non-proliferation, disarmament and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, as well as in the elimination of weapons of mass destruction. ASEAN believes that the strength and value of regionalism lie in its inclusiveness, rules-based nature and emphasis on mutual benefit and respect. We remain committed to our collective efforts towards regional disarmament initiatives in the light of the increasingly complex security challenges facing us today.

ASEAN views transparency, confidence-building measures and progress in regional disarmament as indispensable to improving the security environment of the Pacific region. Therefore, we reaffirm our commitment to the obligations set forth in the disarmament treaties to which ASEAN member States are signatories, and we value the platform of regional dialogue in facilitating the implementation of our commitments in a balanced manner.

We reiterate our commitment to preserving the South-East Asian region as a zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction, as enshrined in the Treaty on the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapons-Free Zone — the SEANWFZ Treaty — and the ASEAN Charter. We stress the importance of the full and effective implementation of the SEANWFZ Treaty, including through the Plan of Action to Strengthen the Implementation of the SEANWFZ Treaty for the period 2018 to 2022.

We reaffirm our commitment to engaging the nuclear-weapon States in a steadfast manner and intensifying ongoing efforts of all parties aimed at resolving all outstanding issues in accordance with the objectives and principles of the SEANWFZ Treaty.

We also recognize the importance of other regional nuclear-weapon-free zones to the existing global non-proliferation regime and continue to support the ongoing efforts towards the establishment of such zones, especially in the Middle East.

ASEAN continues to undertake various activities on nuclear safety and security and safeguards, including capacity-building. We look forward to formalizing the relations between ASEAN and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) so as to promote greater cooperation on issues related to nuclear safety and security and safeguards, including capacity-building. We welcome the successful convening of the fifth annual meeting of the ASEAN Network of Regulatory Bodies on Atomic Energy, or ASEANTOM, the ASEANTOM five-year work plan (2018-2022) and the ongoing negotiations on the ASEAN-IAEA Practical Arrangements.

On conventional weapons, ASEAN is also very appreciative of the contribution made by the United Nations Regional Centres for Peace and Disarmament, in particular the Asia-Pacific Centre, for the joint collaborative initiatives with some of the countries in our region and with partner States Members of the United Nations this year. The Asia-Pacific Centre organized a workshop for South-East Asia on gun violence and illicit small-arms trafficking from a gender perspective. Held from 3 to 6 July 2018 in Bangkok, the workshop was funded by the United Nations Trust Facility Supporting Cooperation on Arms Regulation.

We welcome the successful outcomes of the sixth meeting of the Steering Committee of the ASEAN Regional Mine Action Centre, or ARMAC, in Phnom Penh on 29 May 2018, and look forward to further strengthening the ARMAC Permanent Secretariat. We further welcome the signing of the Agreement between Cambodia and ARMAC on Hosting and Granting Privileges and Immunities to ARMAC, which took place on 27 February and entered into force on 28 March. We also noted Cambodia's proposal to host an ARMAC regional seminar on the full and effective operationalization of ARMAC, entitled "Enhancing Regional Efforts in Addressing Explosive Remnants of War through an Integrated Approach", in October.

The Ministers noted with satisfaction the progress of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) in its role in enhancing political and security dialogue and cooperation, as well as promoting confidence-building

and preventive diplomacy in the Asia-Pacific region, as it commemorates its twenty-fifth anniversary in 2018. The tenth ARF Intersessional Meeting on Non-Proliferation and Disarmament, co-chaired by Indonesia, Japan and the Republic of Korea, was held in Seoul from 5 to 6 April.

ASEAN sees developing concrete initiatives, building capacity and ensuring continuity through regional cooperation as crucial to making progress on global disarmament commitments. ASEAN remains committed to working together with the international community in this endeavour.

Mr. Smith (Belize): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the 14 States members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) in the thematic debate on regional disarmament and security.

The CARICOM member States remain committed to contributing to the maintenance of international peace and security through the implementation of our regional obligations and through action at the national and regional levels. With security as the fourth pillar of our regional integration process, CARICOM seeks to implement practical and innovative approaches to collaborate with other Member States and institutions in order to combat the multidimensional and complex security threats posed to our region.

States members of CARICOM remain committed to confronting the illicit trade in firearms, which continues to have devastating and lasting impacts on our countries. As CARICOM has already highlighted, in 2017 firearms accounted for 75 per cent of homicides. In addition, we take this opportunity to recall that, as recognized in the CARICOM Counter-Terrorism Strategy,

“an effective counter-terrorism strategy must address limiting access by terrorists and violent extremists to firearms, ammunition, explosives and related precursors”.

To support our efforts in confronting this contemporary scourge, partnerships have been an essential means of developing capacity and strengthening frameworks. In that regard, we count among our important partners entities from the United Nations system, including in particular the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament

and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean (UNLIREC).

In December 2018, CARICOM's Implementation Agency for Crime and Security (IMPACS) and UNLIREC will host a national authorities meeting on firearms to facilitate and strengthen cooperation among Caribbean and international partners in addressing firearms trafficking, including forensic ballistics. CARICOM notes with appreciation the results of the multi-year project by UNLIREC to further strengthen the capacity of 14 Caribbean States to combat small-arms trafficking through improved stockpile-management and weapons-destruction procedures.

The Regional Centre has also assisted CARICOM member States in enhancing the capacity of more than 170 security-sector officials from the Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, the Dominican Republic, Guyana, Jamaica, Saint Kitts and Nevis, and Trinidad and Tobago. As a result, the first potential match in the Americas was recorded in the INTERPOL Ballistic Information Network in 2017 between a firearm recovered in Belize that had original markings from Guatemala.

The participation of women and young people in the disarmament discourse is paramount. We therefore recognize the initiative of UNLIREC to engage more than 400 young people across the region, including in Trinidad and Tobago, to develop some 200 community-based indicators to measure progress in attaining target 16.4 of the Sustainable Development Goals by the year 2030. We acknowledge that UNLIREC works with its other partners to conduct these training sessions in our region, and we take the opportunity to thank the United States of America and Canada for their support in that connection.

Partnerships have also resulted in the enhancement and expansion of the CARICOM Advance Passenger Information System (APIS) to ensure inclusion of all member States and interested third States. CARICOM's APIS is the world's only multilateral system that allows States to verify the presence of a person of interest on board an aircraft. A similar system known as the CARICOM Advance Cargo Information System has been established to allow member States to conduct profiling of cargo.

Also, in July 2018, CARICOM IMPACS, with funding from the tenth European Development Fund Project, delivered double casting training and equipment to local law enforcement and firearm examiners in

Dominica, Haiti, Saint Kitts and Nevis and Suriname. The capacity-building exercise targeted those States, given that the other member States had recently benefited from double casting training and kits. As a result, all member States have access to the services of an integrated ballistics-identification system.

CARICOM is committed to the full implementation of the CARICOM-United Nations 1540 Implementation Programme to prevent the transit, trans-shipment, import, export, re-export or brokering of dual-use materials that can be used in the development of chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear weapons and related materials. We welcome the upcoming regional conference to be held next month in Bolivia, entitled “Seizing the opportunities, reducing the risks”, where States will share best practices on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004).

CARICOM’s ultimate goal through the implementation of our crime and security strategy is to improve citizen security. However, our region continues to face the challenge of limited resources with which to confront the various complex and multifaceted security issues we face. We seek meaningful and mutually beneficial partnerships as we strive to increase our institutional efficiency and human capacity in addressing the complex regional and global issues we are facing. In that regard, we wish to thank our various partners, regional and subregional organizations and civil society organizations that contribute financial, technical and other resources needed in the region to achieve our strategic goals.

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

Ms. Vlădulescu (European Union): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU). The candidate countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania, as well as the Republic of Moldova, align themselves with this statement.

The war in Syria has entered its eighth year of continuous and widespread violence, with persistent and brutal violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, and with the repeated use of chemical weapons by the Syrian regime and by Da’esh. We must all remember that the Syrian regime bears the overwhelming responsibility for the catastrophic

humanitarian situation in the country and the suffering of the Syrian people.

The EU reiterates that there can be no military solution to the Syrian conflict. Only a political solution in line with Security Council resolution 2254 (2015) can bring peace to Syria and its people. We condemn in the strongest terms all attacks, both intentional and indiscriminate, against civilian populations and civilian infrastructure — hospitals and schools — which contravene international humanitarian law. We underline that international humanitarian law is applicable and binding with respect to the use of all weapons. The use of barrel bombs, cluster bombs and incendiary weapons in Syria may amount to war crimes.

We reiterate our strongest condemnation of the use of chemical weapons by the Syrian Armed Forces in at least four cases — as confirmed by the Joint Investigative Mechanism of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and the United Nations — and by Da’esh in at least two cases. There can be no impunity, and those responsible must be held accountable. In this context, we support the recent decision of the Conference of States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention to enhance the OPCW’s capacity to identify the perpetrators of the use of chemical weapons in Syria and to develop universal attribution arrangements.

The EU imposed additional restrictive measures against Syrian high-level officials and scientists for their role in the development and use of chemical weapons. On 15 October 2018, EU Foreign Ministers adopted a new regime of restrictive measures to address the use and proliferation of chemical weapons.

Syria also remains non-compliant with regard to its Safeguards Agreement under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). The EU deplores Syria’s lack of commitment to resolving all outstanding issues in full cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and calls on Syria to sign and ratify the Additional Protocol without delay.

The EU welcomes the ongoing diplomatic efforts with the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea that have contributed to the easing of tensions. The EU urges the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea to seize this historic opportunity and engage seriously in the follow-on negotiations with a view to achieving lasting peace and security on the Korean peninsula. It is essential

that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea embark on a credible path towards complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization and the abandonment of its other weapons of mass destruction programmes. Until the Democratic People's Republic of Korea does take concrete steps towards denuclearization, we will continue to strictly enforce existing sanctions and call upon all States to do the same.

We call upon the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to maintain its declared suspension of testing of nuclear weapons and of ballistic-missile launches, to comply with its obligations under multiple Security Council resolutions, including returning to compliance with the NPT and the IAEA Safeguards at an early date, and to sign and ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty without delay.

We recall that the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) is a key element of the global non-proliferation architecture and a significant achievement of multilateral diplomacy, endorsed by the Security Council (resolution 2231 (2015)). In this context, the EU deeply regrets the withdrawal of the United States from the JCPOA. As confirmed by the IAEA, Iran has continued to implement its nuclear-related commitments, and it must continue to do so.

Alongside implementation by Iran of its nuclear-related commitments, the lifting of sanctions constitutes an essential part of the JCPOA. Work is under way towards the formation of a legal entity to allow European companies to continue their legitimate trade with Iran in line with Security Council resolution 2231 (2015). We call upon Iran to play a constructive role in the region and not to undertake any activities related to ballistic missiles, which are inconsistent with resolution 2231 (2015), and to cease arms transfers, which are prohibited under Security Council resolutions, including resolution 2216 (2015).

The proliferation of ballistic missiles, especially those capable of delivering weapons of mass destruction, is a destabilizing factor in many regions. The EU is particularly concerned about the pursuit of ballistic missiles not only by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and Iran, but also Syria. The subscription of all States to The Hague Code of Conduct would build confidence, encourage restraint and create more stability and security for all.

The EU reaffirms its full support for the establishment of a zone free of nuclear and all other

weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems in the Middle East. We consider the 1995 NPT resolution valid until its goals and objectives are achieved and strongly support the outcome of the 2010 NPT Review Conference on the Middle East. We maintain the view that dialogue and building confidence among all stakeholders is the only sustainable way towards a meaningful conference to be attended by all States of the Middle East on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at by them. We continue to call on all States in the region that have not yet done so to join the NPT, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention.

The EU recognizes the legitimate interest of non-nuclear-weapon States in receiving unequivocal security assurances from nuclear-weapon States as part of binding and agreed security arrangements. The EU calls on all nuclear-weapon States to reaffirm existing security assurances and to sign and ratify the relevant protocols to the treaties establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones.

The European security order is based on the principles of the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of States, the inviolability of borders, the peaceful settlement of disputes and the free choice of countries in deciding their own future. Unfortunately, those long-standing key principles of European security have not been respected by all.

The EU recalls that Russia has specifically committed to refraining from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or sovereignty of Ukraine under the Budapest Memorandum of 1994 on security assurances. We call upon Russia to honour and fulfil its commitment.

The EU's support for Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders is unwavering. We continue to condemn and will not recognize the illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol. In the absence of progress in the implementation of the Minsk agreements, EU leaders, in June 2018, agreed to extend economic sanctions targeting specific sectors of the Russian economy. Moreover, our visa-ban list has been expanded. We remain deeply concerned over the continued fighting and the loss of life in eastern Ukraine and about information on the presence of military equipment and personnel from Russia in separatist-

held areas. We call on all sides to swiftly implement the Minsk agreements and respect their commitments in full in order to achieve a sustainable political solution.

We encourage all States Members of the United Nations to work actively for the resolution of the problems of regional instability and insecurity and of the conflict situations that are often at the root of armament programmes. The EU strongly supports the establishment of regional and subregional confidence and security-building measures as an important tool to build trust, enhance transparency and military predictability, avoid conflict and maintain stability.

European countries have highly benefited from the conventional arms control and confidence- and security-building measures within the auspices of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), in particular the commitments in the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe, the Vienna Document, the Treaty on Open Skies, the OSCE Document on Small Arms and Light Weapons, the OSCE Document on Stockpiles of Conventional Ammunition and the Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security. We underline the importance of fully implementing those commitments.

The EU supports OSCE activities on Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) and chemical safety and security in Ukraine, as well as against illicit trafficking and excessive accumulation of small arms and light weapons and stockpiles of conventional ammunition in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Georgia.

The full statement of the European Union will be placed on PaperSmart.

Mr. Carrillo Gómez (Paraguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): The undermining of disarmament and regional non-proliferation initiatives constitutes a threat to global peace and security. Paraguay calls on Latin American and Caribbean States to increase their efforts to tackle the common challenges of the region; to continue to direct their economic, intellectual and other resources towards peaceful purposes and the socioeconomic development of their peoples; and to discourage arms races that could exacerbate the risk of armed confrontation in the region.

Latin America and the Caribbean is a zone of peace, free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. We call for a reinvigoration of

our region's calling to promote peace, disarmament and non-proliferation and the lowest possible level of armaments and military forces. We recall the value of having the equal participation of women in disarmament processes, non-proliferation and arms control in the region.

Paraguay recognizes and appreciates the work of the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, the Organization of American States, the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States and MERCOSUR in promoting international cooperation and friendly relations among States, in particular for the exchange of information and experiences for the adoption of joint norms and mechanisms, for training human resources and for monitoring the manufacture, trade, trafficking and registration of weapons, ammunition, explosives and other related materials, as well as for the comprehensive fight against their illegal aspects and transnational crime, including the fight against terrorism.

The delegation of Paraguay also underscores and thanks the voices of civil society and the academic world in Latin America and the Caribbean in advocating disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control.

Mr. Hassan (Egypt): The Middle East remains one of the most volatile regions in the world. The situation continues to worsen with the unprecedented spread of conflicts, proxy wars, terrorism and sectarian violence.

The second preambular paragraph of the Final Document of the Tenth Special Session of the General Assembly, which the Assembly adopted by consensus in 1978, states that "disarmament and arms limitation... are essential ... for the strengthening of international peace and security" (*resolution S-10/2*). The same document also states, in paragraph 13, that

"Enduring international peace and security cannot be built on the accumulation of weaponry ... nor be sustained by a precarious balance of deterrence or doctrines of strategic superiority. Genuine and lasting peace can only be created through the effective implementation of the security system provided for in the Charter of the United Nations and the speedy and substantial reduction of arms and armed forces" (*ibid.*).

Today, in the year 2018, some still argue that peace and security can be achieved in the Middle East through deterrence and the accumulation of weaponry instead of engagement on the establishment of an equitable security architecture that achieves the collective and collaborative security of all the States and peoples of the region.

Serious steps towards the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) in the Middle East could have saved the world and the region from the recent incidents involving the actual use of WMDs and several incidents of illegitimate military aggression, as well as the chronic, country-specific proliferation concerns.

In addition to its commitment to achieving a lasting and fair peace in the Middle East, Egypt has constructively engaged with all international efforts aimed at addressing the challenges related to arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation in the region. Based on our previous experiences with several failed attempts, we strongly believe that the United Nations represents the most suitable venue for the States of the region to elaborate and negotiate such a security and arms-control architecture, which would be conducive to lasting peace.

Previous attempts to launch such negotiations have been blocked due to the lack of political will on the part of those who continue to wittingly ignore the severity of the deteriorating security conditions in the region and the inevitability of further catastrophic consequences. The region is already witnessing a new chapter of a gravely alarming arms race, and we cannot continue to stand idly watching with our hands tied.

We urge all Member States to support the relevant initiatives and to honour previous agreements and unequivocal undertakings. Missing another opportunity to engage in a constructive, inclusive and consensus-based process will only mean a call for the continuation of violence, chaos and arms races.

Mr. Wood (United States of America): States base their decisions regarding deterrence and defence on their perceptions of the security environment. The United States initiative on creating the conditions for nuclear disarmament reflects that reality by recognizing that reducing regional tensions and conflicts will contribute to creating conditions conducive to progress on nuclear disarmament. Let me offer a few examples.

In East Asia, progress has begun in changing the regional security environment, though more work remains to be done. Last year at this time, North Korea's unlawful, undeclared and destabilizing missile launches and its sixth nuclear test in September 2017 were foremost in our mind and represented a grave threat to the international community. This year we are meeting in the context of engagement between the United States and North Korea aimed at holding North Korea to its commitment to completing denuclearization. The United States goal remains a final, fully verified denuclearization of North Korea, and any premature relief in economic or diplomatic pressure would diminish the chances of achieving that goal. By fulfilling its obligations to eliminate its nuclear and ballistic-missile programmes under Security Council resolutions, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea may finally realize the security and prosperity it seeks.

China continues to invest considerable resources in maintaining and modernizing its nuclear force. China is pursuing a new generation of nuclear delivery systems as it works to establish a nuclear triad, including next-generation missiles and a stealth, long-range strategic bomber. Those developments are matched with robust investments to upgrade China's conventional military and support forces. Chinese military modernization remains centrally focused on degrading core United States operational and technological advantages in order to coerce United States allies and partners and eventually establish hegemony across the region. China's lack of transparency regarding the scope and scale of its modernization programme risks destabilizing the region and, coupled with increasingly assertive actions regionally, threatens to undermine regional stability and poison the atmosphere for progress on nuclear disarmament.

Reducing nuclear danger in Asia — home to multiple States in possession of nuclear weapons — is critical to the safety and security of the region and the world. The United States urges all States with nuclear weapons to exercise restraint regarding nuclear and missile capabilities and encourages efforts to promote confidence-building and discourage destabilizing actions.

The Middle East also remains a region where serious security challenges persist. The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) did not put us on a path to addressing Iran's malign conduct or

put a nuclear-weapons capability permanently out of reach. The theory that the JCPOA would positively contribute to regional and international peace and security has fallen flat. Indeed, the Iranian regime used the economic benefits it received under the JCPOA to fund its destabilizing activities in Syria, Yemen, Iraq and elsewhere.

President Trump made clear that the United States is ready to negotiate a new and better deal that comprehensively addresses our concerns and fully integrates Iran politically and economically into the community of nations, provided Iran is willing to change its behaviour and take lasting steps that demonstrate that its nuclear programme will forever remain exclusively peaceful. In the meantime, Iran must abide by its safeguards obligations and fully cooperate with all the requests of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) for information and access. To truly lead to peace and security in the region, any deal also must address Iran's missile development and proliferation, the long-standing concerns about human rights, its compliance with the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), its support for terrorism, hostage taking and its destabilization of its neighbours.

Syria's continuing violation of its international obligations poses a grave and destabilizing threat to the region and the world. Seven years after the IAEA Board of Governors first found Syria in non-compliance with its Safeguards Agreement for constructing an undeclared plutonium production reactor at Deir ez-Zor, Syria continues to refuse to cooperate with the IAEA's investigation. Further, the Al-Assad regime's use of chemical weapons is in clear violation of the CWC and undermines the long-standing global norm against the use of chemical weapons. Security requires compliance with international agreements and obligations, and all States have an interest in Syria's compliance with its obligations under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the Chemical Weapons Convention.

The United States continues to support the goal of a Middle East zone free of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems alongside a comprehensive and durable regional peace. We remain convinced, however, that arrangements and modalities for negotiating such a zone should be mutually agreed among all the regional States and not imposed from the outside, consistent with international practice regarding such zones. That should be true at every stage, not just at

the conclusion of negotiations. Thus we strongly reject efforts by the Group of Arab States to use this forum to dictate terms and modalities for pursuing such a zone through costly and politically motivated proposals that do not enjoy consensus support in the region. Should the Arab Group decide to move forward with its unconstructive draft decision, we urge all States to join us in voting against it. The United States stands ready to support any regional proposals that have consensus support among all the States in the region and are based on direct and inclusive dialogue.

The United States is also deeply concerned by Russia's actions, which are aimed at undermining security in Europe and which make progress on disarmament less likely. Russia's violation of its obligations under the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, its destabilizing and illegal actions in Ukraine, its shameless defence of the Al-Assad regime's repeated use of chemical weapons and its aggressive actions in outer space are long-standing concerns that remain unresolved. In the past year, Russia has used chemical weapons in the United Kingdom and had the temerity to blame the United Kingdom and other European countries for that attack.

None of us should be under the illusion that the long-term goal of the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons can be achieved without doing the hard work necessary to address those security challenges. We encourage all States to join us in reinvigorating that work by engaging in a realistic dialogue about the world as it is and the steps we can take to reshape it into the world we would like it to be.

Mr. Syrymbet (Kazakhstan): General disarmament and the maintenance of global security are closely interrelated and interdependent processes, and in order to advance them globally, we need, first of all, the sincere efforts of States Members of the United Nations to work at the regional level towards those long-cherished visions. It is of great concern that instability and growing tensions persist in various regions of the world, thereby impairing regional disarmament and security goals from being achieved.

Like other delegations, we believe that the situations in North-East Asia and the Middle East, as well as in some other parts of the world, retain a high potential for volatility and conflict. We should therefore definitely bring political trust and ongoing, inclusive dialogue back into international affairs so as not to

imperil the safety and future of humankind. In that regard, we welcome the ongoing positive developments on the Korean peninsula that prove the relevance and importance of that approach. Kazakhstan calls upon all Member States to support the existing communications between the parties concerned in order to achieve full and irreversible denuclearization of the Korean peninsula as early as possible.

At the same time, the Middle East issue requires our immediate attention. The creation of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East is a vital step towards ensuring lasting and durable peace and stability in the region.

The establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones is one of the most effective means to enhance disarmament and prevent proliferation. Therefore, Kazakhstan, as a State party to the Treaty on a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Central Asia, is committed to consolidating the efforts of all countries constituting nuclear-weapon-free zones as a means of expanding and creating new zones throughout the world and of fostering cooperation among them.

With regard to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), Kazakhstan stands for preserving and further unflinchingly implementing the agreement, to which we do not see any alternative. That historic multilateral document has fulfilled its primary mission by putting Iran on a nuclear-weapon-free path. Full compliance with the JCPOA has had a significant impact on normalizing the situation in the region and beyond. Notwithstanding certain complications related to the obligations by some parties to that agreement, we hope we can achieve its full implementation.

We would like to express our appreciation to the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) Regional Disarmament Branch and the three United Nations Regional Centres for their valuable contribution towards regional and global disarmament, peace and security. In particular, we would like to highlight our cooperation with the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific (UNRCPD) in supporting its outreach activities. Last month, with the generous assistance of the European Union and UNRCPD, Astana hosted a joint regional workshop on the fissile material cut-off treaty, which allowed the States of the Asian Pacific region to exchange ideas and contribute towards the process of developing a future treaty. The workshop

appears to be an important element for achieving the objective of the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

We also actively support and contribute to the Disarmament Fellowship Programme of the UNODA for training future young disarmament champions and advocates. That activity is a direct mechanism for attracting young professionals, with their dynamism, creativity and vigour, and engaging them in collective multilateral action on disarmament and security.

Kazakhstan is committed to advancing regional disarmament issues and considers them an essential and integral part of building a secure and stable world.

Mr. Kafle (Nepal): Nepal associates itself with the statement delivered earlier by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

Nepal strongly believes that the regional and global approaches to disarmament and non-proliferation complement each other and should be pursued simultaneously. As noted in the Secretary-General's agenda for disarmament, we must foster new cooperation and dialogue, especially at the regional level, to reduce military spending and build confidence.

My delegation also believes that women, young people and non-governmental agencies are important partners of regional disarmament mechanisms. They are the real change agent, having a capacity to make an impression on the Government policymakers. Nepal encourages the Regional Centres to develop a meaningful partnership with them.

The formal track of disarmament and non-proliferation should be complemented by a second track of tools for developing innovative confidence-building measures.

Disarmament education helps change the basic attitudes of people and policymakers with respect to peace and security. Therefore, the Regional Centres should be encouraged to disseminate information and develop educational modules for the different age groups. In that connection, with the support of the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific (UNRCPD), the Government of Nepal has developed textbook content for peace and disarmament education for the eighth to tenth grades. The Regional Centres should be further strengthened, well resourced and developed as repositories of best practices of regional disarmament efforts. Similarly, the Regional Centres can share good practices and lessons

learned among themselves, which they can emulate in their respective geographic contexts.

Since the late 1980s, Nepal, in partnership with UNRCPD, has been organizing regional meetings and dialogue under the Kathmandu Process. Nepal reaffirms the importance of such regional dialogues for fostering understanding, cooperation and confidence-building in the region and beyond. Nepal thanks the UNRCPD for the support provided to the Member States of the region for their capacity-building and implementation of programmes of action related to disarmament and non-proliferation. My delegation encourages the Member States of the region to identify their areas of interest and work with the Centre in the future.

We also acknowledge the contribution of the Centre towards achieving Sustainable Development Goal 16, as well as in encouraging the participation of women and youth, including through universities and schools, in its disarmament and non-proliferation activities. My delegation also commends the UNRCPD for organizing youth-focused outreach activities to commemorate the tenth anniversary of its physical operation from Kathmandu.

Nepal appreciates the report of the Secretary-General in document A/73/126, which provides an overview of the activities undertaken by the UNRCPD during the period from 1 July 2017 to 30 June 2018. Nepal also echoes his call to countries and non-governmental organizations in the region and beyond to make voluntary contributions to that Centre to ensure the sustainability of its activities and operations as mandated by the General Assembly.

As the host for the UNRCPD, Nepal has submitted a draft resolution on the UNRCPD, contained in document A/C.1/73/L.38 for the consideration of the Committee. We are confident that, as in previous years, we will have the valuable support from all delegations for the adoption of that draft resolution by consensus.

Mr. Hwang (France) (*spoke in French*): France fully adheres to the statement delivered earlier by the observer of the European Union. I will add some remarks in a national capacity.

The regional dimension of the First Committee's work is an issue of great importance to my delegation. At the regional level, former adversaries must work together to build a neighbourhood of peace. Those are ambitious best practices that could inspire the work

we are undertaking in the United Nations and within disarmament conventions of universal scope.

The European Union is the best example, as it has succeeded in drawing lessons from a painful past in order to build a lasting peace by devising a new way of managing differences. It extends to third countries a policy of neighbourliness and cooperation and enables its partners to benefit from that experience. For example, France is actively participating in the European Union assistance programme to promote the entry into force, early universalization and effective implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty. Within that framework, France has organized workshops, study visits and other related activities in Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo and the Philippines.

The international community's mobilization against the threat of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons is a good example of the complementarity of global and regional initiatives. At the global level, the Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons provides a general framework to combat the trade in those weapons and strongly encourages cooperation at all levels. France, as Chair of the third Review Conference of the Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons in 2018, has demonstrated its full commitment in that area.

At the regional level, cooperation in combating small arms and light weapons is essential, given its largely cross-border nature. France is also very actively involved in that area as well, for example, with actions in the Sahelo-Saharan region in the fight against the numerous incidents of cross-border trafficking, first and foremost, that of weapons, ammunition and explosives. Operation Serval led to the seizure of 200 tons of weapons and ammunition in 2013 and 2014. Since then, Operation Barkhane has continued to seize several tons of weapons and ammunition each year, which contributes to the fight against illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and disrupts the flow of weapons to terrorist groups.

Those are far from being the only French initiatives at the regional level. We can also mention the review of the European Union's strategy to fight the trade in small arms and light weapons and the efforts of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) to encourage good practices with regard to such weapons .

Finally, at the subregional level, France supports the Center for Development of Post-Conflict Mine Action and Decontamination Actions in Ouidah, Benin. This is a regional arrangement and helps our African partners to build capacity to evaluate, regulate and manage small arms and light weapons and ammunition stockpiles.

At the level of the European continent, France, like the other States members of the European Union, supports the implementation of military transparency and confidence-building measures adapted to its geostrategic situation. We actively participate in so-called structured dialogue seeking to bolster such measures within the OSCE. The Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe has enabled the destruction of a great deal of equipment. My country will not resign itself to seeing the Treaty wither away and calls on parties to create the conditions to return to its full and complete implementation.

We also express our concern about the disparities in the implementation of the Treaty on Open Skies and call on States parties to seek solutions in good faith to overcome them, as the Treaty is one of the pillars of the European security architecture. The Vienna Document, for its part, is a confidence-building, transparency and risk-reduction instrument. My delegation, together with all countries concerned, seeks to bolster and modernize the text in order to adapt it to changing military doctrine and equipment.

Other instruments achieved consensus within the OSCE, particularly those addressing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction or cross-cutting threats — cybersecurity and the management of small arms and light weapons and ammunition stockpiles. They are being closely studied by the OSCE's partners in Asia and the Mediterranean as best practices that can be adapted to their specific regional environment.

The Chair (*spoke in French*): I call on the representative of Algeria to introduce draft resolution A/C.1/73/L.30.

Mr. Khaldi (Algeria): Algeria associates itself with the statement delivered earlier on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and with the statement to be delivered later on behalf of the League of Arab States. Given the particular significance of regional disarmament and security, my delegation would like to add the following remarks.

Algeria remains fully committed to promoting peace and security at the regional and international levels as part and parcel of a deep-seated guiding principle that continues to inform its foreign policy on the world stage. For this reason, Algeria is a strong advocate for dialogue, cooperation and solidarity within the traditional framework of its United Nations membership. In that spirit, my country would like once again to highlight the importance of the Treaty of Pelindaba, which is a landmark instrument whose full and proper implementation will undoubtedly strengthen peace and security, both regionally and globally. Nevertheless, Algeria remains deeply concerned at the fact that a nuclear-weapon-free zone is still out of reach in the Middle East region. It is against this backdrop that the Group of Arab States has submitted draft decision A/C.1/73/L.22, on convening a conference on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction based on arrangements mutually agreed upon between the parties.

In the light of the deteriorating security in its neighbourhood, Algeria has repeatedly alerted the international community about the risks associated with the unregulated and uncontrolled proliferation of all types of conventional weapons in the North African, Sahel and Mediterranean regions. Indeed, Algeria is deeply committed to consolidating stability and security beyond its borders by working closely together with other neighbouring countries for a better future for all peoples of the region. In this respect, my country remains firmly convinced that a political solution through comprehensive dialogue and national reconciliation among all Libyans is the only way to settle the crisis in Libya. We therefore call on the international community to exert all necessary political and diplomatic efforts aimed at supporting, encouraging and promoting a national and inclusive solution for Libya.

As far as the situation in Mali is concerned, the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali emanating from the Algiers process remains the sole frame of reference for the Government, other Malian parties and the international community. My country is strongly committed to ensuring the due implementation of the Agreement, and therefore continues to play a key role in this regard by chairing the Follow-up/Monitoring Committee.

The Algerian delegation welcomes the Secretary-General's report entitled "Strengthening of security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region" (A/73/94), which contains the perspectives of Member States on ways and means to strengthen security and cooperation in the region. I take this opportunity to thank those Member States that have contributed to the implementation of resolution 72/69.

In view of the Mediterranean policy we have developed through the principles of cooperation, good-neighbourliness and mutual respect, Algeria has, as in previous years, the honour of submitting to the First Committee and the General Assembly at its seventy-third session draft resolution A/C.1/73/L.30, under agenda item 106, entitled "Strengthening of security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region". In this regard, the Algerian delegation and the draft's sponsors count on the support of all Member States for the adoption of this text by consensus.

The Chair (*spoke in French*): I call on the representative of Pakistan to introduce draft resolutions A/C.1/73/L.5, A/C.1/73/L.6 and A/C.1/73/L.7.

Mr. Ahmed (Pakistan): The General Assembly has long recognized that global peace and security depends in large measure on stability at the regional and subregional levels. In view of the inextricable relationship between regional stability and international peace, the Charter of the United Nations acknowledges and provides for regional arrangements to ensure global peace and security. In the post-Cold War era, most threats to peace and security arise mainly among States located in the same region or subregion. International and bilateral efforts towards disarmament and arms control are therefore reinforced and complemented by regional approaches towards that end.

The Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (resolution S-10/2) and the resolutions of the United Nations Disarmament Commission and the First Committee have repeatedly confirmed and affirmed the need for the simultaneous pursuit of regional and global approaches, including agreements in the area of disarmament and arms limitation. Through these mechanisms and this normative framework, the international community has endorsed two well-recognized and tested tools — conventional arms control and confidence-building measures — particularly at the regional and subregional levels. The resources

being expended on arms and weapons systems could be devoted to economic and social development and to the protection of the environment for the benefit of all peoples. Several regions of the world have benefitted from the application of principles and guidelines in the areas of conventional arms control and developed appropriate confidence-building measures.

It is important to recall and reiterate some of the relevant core principles agreed by the United Nations, including the preservation of balance in the defence capabilities of States at the lowest level of armaments and military forces, the special responsibility of militarily significant States and States with larger military capabilities in promoting agreements for regional security, undiminished security, and the pursuit of disarmament measures in an equitable and balanced manner. Regional arrangements for disarmament and arms limitation should give priority to addressing the most destabilizing military capabilities and imbalances in both conventional and non-conventional spheres. In regions characterized by tensions and disputes, achieving a stable balance of conventional forces and weapons through cooperative regional initiatives is imperative.

Confidence-building measures have proved their efficacy over the years at the regional and subregional levels, especially in the area of arms control and disarmament. They also have a positive correlation with international peace and security. As the resolutions of the General Assembly and the guidelines of the United Nations Disarmament Commission have affirmed, confidence-building measures at the regional level have to be tailored to the specifics of the region and should begin with simple arrangements on transparency, openness and risk reduction before the concerned States find themselves in a position to pursue more substantive arms-control and disarmament measures.

Confidence-building measures are significant because they can lead to the creation of favourable conditions for the peaceful settlement of existing disputes and facilitate the solution of any situation that might lead to international friction. However, such measures should not become an end in themselves. Rather, they should be pursued in conjunction with good-faith efforts for the peaceful settlement of disputes in accordance with the United Nations Charter. They can make a significant contribution towards creating a global political environment that is conducive to

promoting international agreements on disarmament and arms limitation.

Pakistan feels privileged to have, for several years now, spearheaded initiatives at the United Nations on regional disarmament, conventional arms control and confidence-building measures. A practical expression of Pakistan's commitment to promoting those globally agreed goals is reflected through the draft resolutions that Pakistan submits every year in the First Committee, which address issues of regional disarmament, confidence-building measures in the regional and subregional context, and conventional arms control at regional and subregional levels. As in previous years, Pakistan's delegation is submitting these three draft resolutions — A/C.1/73/L.5, A/C.1/73/L.6 and A/C.1/73/L.7 — which recognize the significance of regional approaches to arms control, disarmament and confidence-building for international peace and stability, and the complementarity between regional and global approaches. We look forward to the continued support of Member States for the adoption of these draft resolutions this year as well.

Mr. Nugroho (Indonesia): Indonesia associates itself with the statements made on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). In addition, we would like to underline the following.

As critical as the responsibility of States possessing nuclear weapons is in undertaking the concrete and urgent elimination of their nuclear weapons, regional organizations and groups also have an important role to play in pushing for the elimination of all weapons of mass destruction, as well as in promoting other disarmament and non-proliferation imperatives. The value of regionalism lies in its inclusiveness, rules-based nature and emphasis on mutual benefit and action. The countries in each region can — and some do — play a vital role in advancing peaceful coexistence with the principle of undiminished security for all at the lowest level of armament.

Indonesia has led and contributed to all meaningful measures that instil both regional and global peace and security and will continue to do so. Through domestic initiatives and various ASEAN mechanisms, Indonesia remains determined to play its role effectively to that end. Indonesia reiterates its commitment to preserving the Southeast Asia region as a zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction, as enshrined

in the ASEAN Charter and the Treaty on the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone (SEANWFZ). We call for the full and effective implementation of the Treaty, as reflected in the Kuala Lumpur Declaration on ASEAN 2025: Forging Ahead Together.

The extension of the ASEAN-European Union Plan of Action for another five years, from 2018 to 2022, is also positive in this regard. A more positive response by nuclear-weapon States, however, is also needed to resolve all outstanding issues in accordance with the objectives and principles of the SEANWFZ Treaty. Indonesia also supports other existing nuclear-weapon-free zones and calls for more of them, including the essential and long-delayed establishment of such a zone in the Middle East.

Last but not least, we thank the United Nations Regional Centres for Peace and Disarmament, including the Asia-Pacific Centre, for their important work. We would be remiss if we did not also commend the relevant non-governmental organizations and civil-society groups for their critical activism and for raising awareness on the elimination of nuclear weapons and other disarmament imperatives. There may not always be the requisite political will, but with sustained effort and closer collaboration, better opportunities can arise to bring about the required change.

Mr. Czepelak (Poland): Poland associates itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union.

Poland remains committed to the existing regional security architecture, founded on conventional arms-control regimes and confidence- and security-building measures. Regrettably, the current security environment in our region is characterized by the lack of trust caused by the Russian aggression against Ukraine and Russia's decision to suspend its participation in the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe. Russia has also vetoed the process of modernizing confidence- and security-building measures.

In this difficult and challenging environment, Poland's efforts are aimed at strengthening and enhancing existing arrangements. Poland has made a constructive proposal to modernize the Vienna Document on risk reduction in hazardous or dangerous incidents of a military nature. Poland has also co-sponsored 10 proposals to modernize the Vienna Document, including by lowering thresholds for prior notification and observation, improving verification

options for evaluation visits and introducing new regulations concerning the so-called snap exercises. Moreover, to address the issue of increased military activity in the region, Poland launched in 2017 an initiative on voluntary reporting on military exercises in the Forum for Security Cooperation of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Furthermore, under chapter X of the Vienna Document, Poland concluded two bilateral agreements on military transparency with its neighbours, Ukraine and Belarus. To increase transparency and confidence, mutual inspection visits are taking place each year on an equal basis.

Poland has spared no effort to engage in the structured dialogue process within the OSCE. Although its results have yet to be seen, we hope that this process will help to restore trust and mutual understanding in the OSCE area. The structured dialogue can therefore be viewed as a specific confidence-building measure.

Aggression against Ukraine undermines the core principles and commitments of the United Nations and the OSCE, as well as our collective security. Russia's current policy is entirely in breach of the commitment not to change borders through the use of military force. It violates the principle of refraining from the threat or use of force and contradicts the commitment that every nation has the right to determine its own political, economic and security arrangements.

The peaceful settlement of this conflict requires the constructive engagement of all parties and the full implementation of the Minsk agreements. Poland strongly supports the efforts of the Normandy format and of the OSCE, including the Trilateral Contact Group. We are one of the largest donors to the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine, accounting for 41 monitors and experts.

The illicit transfer, accumulation and misuse of conventional arms are of particular importance in the context of regional security. The situation in Ukraine shows how those activities can not only destabilize the region but also affect the security of all of Europe. We should spare no effort to assist countries like Ukraine to prevent and combat this illicit trade. One way of doing that is through applying stricter controls. Poland's arms-export-control system was established and developed over the years to be consistent with European Union policy and meets most advanced standards. The further strengthening of such instruments as the Arms Trade

Treaty and the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, and enhancing their implementation at the regional level, should also be encouraged.

States affected by the conflict also often face the challenge of constant insecurity owing to contamination from landmines, explosive remnants and unexploded ordnance. Their ability to conduct effective mine-clearance action is often hindered by the lack of control of State authorities over the territory in question. Poland is determined to pursue the objectives of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, and to promote its universalization and full implementation. The Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs continues to provide financial support to the United Nations Mine Action Service for mine action and risk mitigation in Gaza.

We believe that it is in our common interest to stabilize the situation in the Middle East, reduce tensions in the region and, most importantly, to prevent further proliferation of nuclear weapons. It is crucial for us and for the security of Europe, given its immediate proximity to the Middle East.

Ms. Agladze (Georgia): I would like to make a few remarks on regional disarmament and security from our national perspective.

The militarization of our region is a major concern and threat — not just to my country, but the entire region. The trend of increased militarization of the Black Sea region by the Russian Federation has not been reversed, despite its international commitments and calls from the international community. To the contrary, it persists and in some respects has even accelerated.

The First Committee is aware that, for 10 years now, the two occupied regions of Georgia have been heavily militarized. While prior to 2008, the Russian military forces were present under the hat of the so-called peacekeepers; now, within the mandate of the Commonwealth of Independent States, they are openly pursuing the policy of factual annexation of the two regions. The scale of the military build-up is a good indicator in this regard: there are 4,500 military troops and 1,300 Federal Security Service personnel illegally stationed in each of the regions, with sophisticated offensive weapons and missile systems, anti-access/

area-denial capabilities and more — all having a wide-range coverage across the whole Caucasus and large part of the Black Sea. Regular, wide-scale military drills aimed at power projection are an additional source of threats and tensions in the region.

The representative of the Russian Federation categorically denies that the Russian military build-up of offensive weaponry goes beyond the needs of ensuring its territorial integrity, but what we observe are tanks, multiple-launch rocket systems, surface-to-air and surface-to-surface missile systems, S-300 air-defence missile systems and more. The power-projection capabilities extend far beyond Russia's regional boundaries and defence needs, as it seems to represent. If this assessment is inaccurate, as the Russian colleague argues, the best way to prove that would be to allow international monitors on the ground, in keeping with Russia's commitment under the six-point Ceasefire Agreement of 12 August 2008, which clearly calls for the access of international monitors to the Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions. However, the Russian Federation and its so-called border guards have consistently prevented the European Union Monitoring Mission from fully exercising its mandate and entering the regions for monitoring and verification purposes.

When it comes to issues related to regional security, Georgia has always been committed to the principle of transparency. That is why we respond to all questions that arise with even greater accountability, including the most ludicrous allegations, such as those concerning the Richard Lugar Centre for Public Health and Research in Tbilisi. The laboratory is designed to promote public and animal health through infectious-disease detection, epidemiological surveillance and research for the benefit of Georgia, the region and the global community. The Centre functions as an integral part of the Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Labour, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia. On 14 and 15 November, the Georgian side is hosting an international peer-review exercise with the participation of experts from 20 countries in the facilities of the laboratory, in accordance with the transparency mechanism approved by the seventh Review Conference of the State Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction.

Alongside other international experts, Russian experts were invited to participate in this exercise, but they declined the invitation. Despite the openness and transparency of the Georgian side, the representatives of the Russian Federation continue to spread disinformation on the functioning of the Lugar Centre. Regrettably, our empirical experience has shown that, although absurd, the Russian allegations have been not just a propaganda tool but lately even part of hybrid warfare in terms of laying the political groundwork for future aggressive actions. Therefore, statements to the effect that Russia will not tolerate bioexperiments along its border should be considered a direct threat to Georgia's security.

In conclusion, I would note that the aforementioned observations reflect the trend not only in Georgia, but in nearby areas. I recall the wide-scale military build-up in the temporarily occupied Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, as well as the Sea of Azov, which has grave regional security implications. I also clearly wish to state that we are not talking about isolated cases, but of the wider pattern of aggressive Russian policies towards its neighbours.

Ms. Gharrawi (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I take this opportunity to align my country's delegation with the statement delivered by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and that to be delivered on behalf of the Group of Arab States.

My country's delegation reaffirms the importance of nuclear-weapon-free zones as key pillars of regional confidence-building measures that can contribute to promoting the non-proliferation regime and nuclear disarmament. Iraq recognizes that the establishment of such zones would be a step towards enhancing nuclear disarmament, maintaining the security of the States concerned and bringing us closer to the lofty goals of achieving and maintaining regional and international peace and security. In that context, Iraq expresses its full support for the creation of such zones, which would contribute to the achievement of the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction.

The Middle East region, like the rest of the world, is witnessing dangerous and sensitive developments that must persuade the international community to shoulder its arduous collective responsibility to create a zone in the Middle East free of nuclear weapons and other

weapons of mass destruction. My delegation reiterates its disappointment at the failure to achieve consensus on the outcome document of the 2015 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).

We reaffirm the importance of the essential role played by the United Nations and the three depositary States of the Treaty in holding a conference on a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, in line with the 1995 resolution on the Middle East and the resolution adopted at the 2010 Review Conference of the Non-Proliferation Treaty. Failure to implement the resolution on the Middle East would undoubtedly lead to continued instability and tensions in the region and further complicate the universalization of the NPT, thereby exposing the non-proliferation regime to challenges and dangers that would reflect negatively on the credibility of the Treaty and its universalization.

My country is committed to multilateralism, and we have worked with the Arab Group to come up with a draft decision requesting the Secretary-General to extend invitations to the States of the region; the three States that sponsored the 1995 resolution on the Middle East, as they are responsible for implementing it; and the relevant international organizations. The invitations would call on them to participate in a 2019 conference on negotiating a treaty to create in the Middle East a zone free of weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons, in keeping with the measures undertaken freely and voluntarily by those States. Such a conference would adopt its resolutions by consensus. We call on all Member States to support this initiative, which would help to maintain regional and international peace and security.

In conclusion, Iraq believes that the nuclear disarmament of the Israeli entity, its accession to the NPT as a non-nuclear State and placing all its nuclear facilities under the overall safeguards regime of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) are conditions that are fundamental and necessary to creating a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East, in line with Security Council resolution 487 (1981). Those steps are necessary to reduce tensions in the Middle East, which lacks security because of the inability to verify the military capabilities of the nuclear facilities of the Israeli entity, while other States in the region subject all their facilities to IAEA oversight.

Mr. Nikolenko (Ukraine): Ukraine is a strong advocate of maintaining international peace and security with the lowest level of armaments possible, including conventional ones. We recognize the important role of conventional arms control, including at the regional and subregional levels, and accordingly welcome all related measures in this field. Ukraine's consistent commitment to strengthening the effectiveness of confidence-building measures (CBMs) also remains unchanged. With this in mind, Ukraine supports and co-sponsors relevant draft resolutions, namely, "Conventional arms control at the regional and subregional levels" (A/C.1/73/L.6), "Confidence-building measures in the regional and subregional context" (A/C.1/73/L.7) and "Information on confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms" (A/C.1/73/L.29).

Ukraine participates in and complies with its obligations under different pan-European confidence-building mechanisms related to conventional-arms control, such as the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe, the Open Skies Treaty and the Vienna Document on Confidence- and Security-Building Measures of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). We attach great importance to bilateral CBMs with neighbouring countries developed in accordance with to the Vienna Document. To date, the relevant bilateral agreements are implemented by Ukraine, on the one side, and Poland, Belarus, Hungary, Slovakia and Romania, on the other.

Unfortunately, Ukraine's earlier proposals to enter into a similar agreement with Russia were not accepted by that country. It is also regrettable that, by launching its military aggression against Ukraine, the Russian Federation created an impasse for subregional military cooperation and confidence-building arrangements among the Black Sea littoral States, in particular the Black Sea Naval Cooperation Task Group and the Confidence- and Security-Building Measures in the Naval Field in the Black Sea.

Moreover, in 2007, after termination of its participation in the 1990 Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe, which was put in place to reduce the risk of major armed conflict, the Russia Federation has consistently avoided information exchange and verification control, especially with respect to the situation in the Southern Military District. The destabilizing accumulations of personnel and military

equipment in this area has enabled the Russian military invasion in Georgia in 2008, which was just mentioned by the representative of Georgia, and aggression against Ukraine six years later. As a result of this hostile activity, conventional-arms control and CBMs regimes do not currently apply on the occupied territories of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine.

What is even more alarming is the progressive militarization of these territories by Russia. The continuing destabilizing transfers of weapon systems, ammunition and military personnel to the territory of Ukraine continues unabated, as witnessed, inter alia, by the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission. The occupation and subsequent militarization of the Crimean peninsula has led to the expansion of the area of use of Russian warships and military aircraft in the Black Sea region and far beyond, in the entire Mediterranean basin. Such activity has far-reaching consequences for security not only in the Black Sea area, but in the whole of South Europe, as well as in North Africa and the Middle East.

The Russian Federation is also actively militarizing the Sea of Azov by increasing the number of warships and expanding their reach across the whole of the Sea. As an example, just this month, the Russian Government allocated a large area in the Sea of Azov — 21.6 square kilometres — to the Russian Defence Ministry. This area is located only 65 kilometres from the city of Mariupol, which is one of Ukraine's largest seaport cities.

The progressive militarization of the Sea of Azov has implications not only for maritime trade and supplies into Ukraine, but also poses an additional military threat to my country. The illegal construction of the Kerch Strait Bridge between Russia and temporarily occupied Crimea has substantially contributed to this threat, in particular by facilitating the further militarization of Crimea and concentrating additional Russian maritime and other forces in the area under the pretext of protecting the bridge and its infrastructure.

That is why the international community has no right to turn a blind eye to this alarming situation and to the Russian Federation's illegal and aggressive activities. It should continue to urge that country to withdraw its military forces and personnel from Ukraine's territory as well as from its other neighbours and stop illegal occupation.

The Chair: I shall now call on those representatives who have requested to speak in exercise of the right of

reply. I would like to remind all delegations that the first intervention is limited to 10 minutes and the second, if any, to five minutes.

Mr. Belousov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I would like to respond to some of the statements made in this conference room.

First, I would like to again categorically deny all the accusations of Russia's involvement in the incident in Salisbury in the United Kingdom linked to the poisoning of the Skripals. Unfortunately, some States continue to convince themselves and the rest of the international community that it is Russia that carried out this inhumane act and was a participant in it. This is not the case. Like other States, we too are interested in who, why and how this crime was committed. Unfortunately, the United Kingdom's investigation of the case has not yet provided an answer to those questions. Therefore, all the accusations that have been heard today about the trace of alleged Russian involvement in the Skripal case are unfounded, groundless and mendacious, I would say.

Now, on the issues related to Ukraine, those who continue to use the terminology of aggression, annexation, invasion and militarization are again saying that never in this region — Eastern Europe — will there ever be security or trust, inasmuch as all of these terms have no basis. No one has invaded or annexed Crimea, and no one invaded Ukraine either. Crimea returned to Russia fully in line with international law, based on the freely held election in which those who are living there voted, the overwhelming majority of whom voted to leave Ukraine and join the Russian Federation.

With respect to eastern Ukraine, the allegations of participation or involvement of Russian armed forces are utter nonsense. If colleagues from Poland, Ukraine and other countries could provide any proof of a Russian military presence in these regions, then we would be ready to consider this proof and respond to it, but for the time being we hear that the Russian army is waging war in Ukraine, and behind this the real state of affairs in the region is being hidden. The real state of affairs in this region is as follows.

A civil war is being waged in two regions of Ukraine. Moreover, I would say that there is a genocide of the Russian population in these areas. This genocide is being carried out by Ukrainian armed forces. Every day there are dozens of incidents in which civilian areas are shelled, and infrastructure that is vitally important

for these cities is being shelled as well. This leads to a large number of casualties. There are reports from the United Nations on this point. Therefore, none of the statements we have heard on Russian involvement in the armed conflict in eastern Ukraine has any justification.

I would now like to respond to the representative of Georgia. I will not go into detail on her whole statement. I would just make a correction and say that the Russian operation in 2008 was called not a peacekeeping operation but a peace-enforcement operation conducted in response to the inhumane actions undertaken by the Saakashvili Government, which resulted in the deaths of 10 per cent of the population of South Ossetia. The Russian Federation was therefore bound to respond to that inhumane situation, and thanks to Russia's efforts, peace was restored. For more than 10 years now, the region has been developing normally, and Georgians and South Ossetians are living side by side, trying to solve all their problems through peaceful rather than military means.

My last point is on the laboratory that the representative of Georgia is pressing to be visited. The Georgian representative forgot to mention, though, that out of the very limited number of experts invited to that laboratory, only four will actually be allowed to take part in the preparation of reports on the laboratory. Such selectivity is not suitable to the Russian Federation. Moreover, it was said that Georgia was trying to demonstrate transparency. However, that is not the case because there are no guarantees of transparency when the experts are going to visit the laboratories to determine for themselves if the experiments being conducted are in fact not for military purposes. No guarantees are provided by either Georgia or the other States that are actively using these laboratories for their own purposes.

And one more thing. Georgian representatives have already officially admitted that the laboratories were indeed carrying out experiments, including on people. The statistics are such that in one experiment on a very dangerous disease, more than 9,000 volunteers were involved, and around 10 per cent of these volunteers died as a result of this experiment. These are the aspects of the work of this laboratory that I would like to highlight. Having said that the Georgians are open and transparent and that the laboratory in question is a very safe one, the representative of Georgia should first check the statements made earlier by her own country

before denying the facts provided by the Russian Federation and blaming it and making insinuations.

Mr. Sun Lei (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): Regarding the statement made by the representative of the United States, the Chinese delegation wishes to exercise its right of reply.

The relevant statements made by the United States are replete with unwarranted accusations against China. China categorically rejects all of these accusations.

China unswervingly pursues a defensive national defence policy and an active defensive military strategy. We are committed to peaceful development and to providing the international community with more public goods in the security field. The growth in Chinese military forces is purely growth in a force for world peace.

China's nuclear policy has been consistent, coherent and highly stable. Ever since day one of our ownership of nuclear weapons, we have been committed to the non-first-use of nuclear weapons under any circumstances. We are committed to the non-use or non-threat-of-use of nuclear weapons against any non-nuclear country. We have kept our nuclear force at the minimum necessary for maintaining national security. Therefore, we pose no threat to any country.

We categorically reject any country's reckless attempt to distort our policy as an excuse to expand its own nuclear arsenal. China is committed to peaceful development, and we are pursuing a defensive nuclear strategy, while upholding the utmost transparency. No country will be threatened by China's nuclear weapons, which represents the most realistic form of transparency. China's development poses no threat to any country. However developed we are or will be in future, we will never seek hegemony or expansionism. "Seeking hegemony" will never be an expression that applies to China.

By contrast, the United States has been building up its nuclear arsenal, expanding the scope of nuclear deterrence and raising the importance of the role of nuclear weapons in its national security policy. It is developing new types of low-yield nuclear warheads, which has reduced the threshold for the use of nuclear weapons and heating up the nuclear arms race and heightened the risk of nuclear war.

Lately, the United States has been threatening to withdraw from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear

Forces Treaty, which has been very important for the maintenance of international strategic stability. As to who is threatening and undermining the process of nuclear disarmament, the truth is clear for all to see, and justice is in the hearts of the people. China wishes to urge the United States to carefully and seriously heed the voice of the international community.

Mr. Kang Myong Chol (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): I would like to exercise my country's right of reply in response to the statement made by the observer of the European Union, in which she repeated a call for the complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization of the Korean peninsula and adherence to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. I would like to reiterate the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's principled position with regard to the nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula.

As everyone recognizes, there is a new trend towards peace and reconciliation on the Korean peninsula thanks to initiatives and the peace-loving efforts of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. These developments have had a positive influence on the progress being made towards stability in North-East Asia. I am happy that many countries support and welcome the ongoing dialogue process as a significant contribution to regional and global peace and security. We hope that this trend will continue. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea stands firm in its commitment to complete denuclearization and to the will to implement the Democratic People's Republic of Korea-United States joint statement responsibly and in good faith.

I take this opportunity to once again express my expectation that all States Members of the United Nations will value this hard-won atmosphere of dialogue and cooperation, in which helpful work conducive to securing a lasting peace on the Korean peninsula is done.

Mr. Nikolenko (Ukraine): I would like to exercise my right of reply to some of the remarks made by my Russian colleague. Yesterday I raised the issue of Donbas (see A/C.1/73/PV.21), so there is no need to repeat myself. I again call upon the Russian Federation to stop insisting that it has nothing to do with the conflict in eastern Ukraine, the so-called civil war or the so-called internal Ukrainian conflict.

The referendum in Crimea was mentioned. I would like to recall the bloody Chechen wars that took place in the 1990s between the Russian Federation and the people of the Chechen Republic, who fought for their independence. Tens of thousands of innocent people were killed by Russian military forces only because of their wish to be independent of Moscow.

I would like to ask my Russian colleague a question. In connection with the referendum in Crimea, organized by the Russian Federation in March 2014, which is considered by the Russian side as having been conducted in full compliance with international law, if a national minority with a dense population in a region of the Russian Federation recalls its non-Russian identity and expresses its wish to become independent of the Russian Federation or to reunite with a neighbouring or other State, would Russian authorities be ready to take steps to organize a referendum on that issue for the people of that region and accept the results of that referendum? Or is it only all right for that State to organize referendums on the territories of other States and then annex those territories or support their so-called independence?

Ms. Agladze (Georgia): I, too, would like to very briefly respond to what my Russian colleague said, first of all about the aggression that took place in 2008. We will not comment on the operation conducted by the Russians. I will say only that there was Russian aggression, which has been well documented by international experts, including the fact-finding mission led by Heidi Tagliavini. She also very clearly said that the intervention in Georgia was premeditated and calculated. I will not go any deeper into the matter. I would add that if crimes were committed during the 2008 war, it would be better for the Russian Federation to cooperate with the International Criminal Court, which has started its investigation into the case, and to be transparent in order to ensure that justice is served.

With regard to the absolutely ludicrous allegations about the Lugar Laboratory, I would like to make two points. I do not know what additional transparency measures the Russian Federation is now requesting. We have pledged and committed to all kinds of transparency measures that exist in the international arena. The Laboratory is open to visits by representatives of the relevant international mechanisms. We will cooperate with every existing international mechanism. The timing of the propaganda now being unleashed against Georgia with regard to the Lugar Laboratory

is extremely questionable because we know that, some years ago, internationally recognized Russian experts from the Gabrichevsky Institute of Epidemiology and Microbiology and the Shemyakin–Ovchinnikov Institute of Bioorganic Chemistry of the Russian Academy of Sciences were able to visit the laboratory on their own on a number of occasions to check the facility. They found nothing suspicious. Why the issue is being raised now is very questionable. I would imagine it is a rhetorical question to which we will not receive an answer. That brings me to the end of my comments.

Mr. Belousov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I thank our colleague of Ukraine for his question and am very grateful for the opportunity to answer.

Indeed, Russia has links to the conflict in eastern Ukraine, but only because we regularly provide humanitarian assistance to the region. Hundreds of provisions have been delivered, and it is thanks to them that people living in inhumane conditions in those regions of Ukraine are able to survive. Humanitarian aid is provided with international oversight. Its content is well known — vital goods, such as food, clothing and medicines. Therefore, I cannot fully reject the idea that Russia has no links to the conflict. We have links to it but in terms only of providing humanitarian aid to civilians living in Donetsk and Luhansk.

The question about the referendum was certainly a difficult one. The representative of Ukraine recalled the terrible events in Russia's past in connection with two Chechen wars. It was a dark period in our country's history. I would, however, like to draw the Committee's attention to the fact that, as a result, we managed to establish peace, calm and security in northern Caucasus. Members can visit Chechnya and see for themselves that the Republic is flourishing. I hope that Ukrainians will be patient and find ways to achieve a positive outcome in addressing their own conflict and issues, just as we did in northern Caucasus.

Lastly, to respond to the representative of Georgia, I do not know to what investigation she is referring but I do know one thing. All international investigations have long proved Georgia's aggression, which was inhuman and tantamount to borderline genocide. But the fact, whether or not it is denied, remains that the events of 8 August 2008 will always be a dark chapter in the history of the Georgian people. We agree that the people themselves are not guilty; rather, it is the Government of Mikheil Saakashvili that bears the responsibility. There is still an outstanding international arrest warrant for him, issued, incidentally, by Georgia. In any case, those are the facts.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.