



# Security Council

Seventy-eighth year

**9300**<sup>th</sup> meeting

Friday, 31 March 2023, 10 a.m.

New York

*Provisional*

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*President:* Mr. Afonso . . . . . (Mozambique)

*Members:*

Albania . . . . .	Mr. Hoxha
Brazil . . . . .	Mr. Costa Filho
China . . . . .	Mr. Geng Shuang
Ecuador . . . . .	Mr. Montalvo Sosa
France . . . . .	Mr. De Rivière
Gabon . . . . .	Mr. Biang
Ghana . . . . .	Mr. Agyeman
Japan . . . . .	Mr. Ishikane
Malta . . . . .	Mr. Camilleri
Russian Federation . . . . .	Mr. Nebenzia
Switzerland . . . . .	Mr. Hauri
United Arab Emirates . . . . .	Mr. Abushahab
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Mr. Kariuki
United States of America . . . . .	Mr. Wood

## Agenda

Threats to international peace and security

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

### **Adoption of the agenda**

*The agenda was adopted.*

### **Threats to international peace and security**

**The President:** In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Belarus, Estonia, Poland and Ukraine to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mrs. Izumi Nakamitsu, High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I also invite His Excellency Mr. Olof Skoog, Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I give the floor to Mrs. Nakamitsu.

**Mrs. Nakamitsu:** On 25 March, the Russian Federation announced that it had reached an agreement with Belarus to station its non-strategic nuclear weapons in Belarusian territory. When it comes to issues related to nuclear weapons, I wish to be clear at the outset: all States must avoid taking any actions that could lead to escalation, mistake or miscalculation. All States parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) — nuclear-weapon States and non-nuclear-weapon States alike — must strictly adhere to the commitments and obligations they assumed under the Treaty.

The fulfilment of those commitments and obligations is an essential element of preventing the spread and use of nuclear weapons and in bringing about their elimination. It is at the core of the maintenance of international peace and security. The elimination of nuclear weapons remains the highest disarmament priority of the United Nations and a goal to which all United Nations States Members remain committed.

The issue of the hosting by a non-nuclear-weapon State of a nuclear-weapon State's nuclear weapons is one that has existed for decades, across various regions and under different arrangements. Those arrangements

predate the NPT, with the exception of the recent announcement. The issue of so-called "nuclear sharing" was debated intensely during the negotiation of the NPT. It has been the subject of subsequent discussions, including at Review Conferences of the Parties to the NPT. States parties have taken different positions and interpretations on the issue of nuclear sharing, and those positions are well-known to all and recorded in the summaries of the various Review Conferences.

The risk of a nuclear weapon being used is currently higher than at any time since the depths of the Cold War. The war in Ukraine represents the most acute example of that risk. The absence of dialogue and the erosion of the disarmament and arms control architecture, combined with dangerous rhetoric and veiled threats, are key drivers of that potentially existential risk. I would therefore like to repeat: States must avoid taking any actions that could lead to escalation, mistake or miscalculation. They should return to dialogue to de-escalate tensions urgently and find ways to develop and implement transparency- and confidence-building measures.

For the sake of all our security, I echo the Secretary-General's call for the Russian Federation and the United States to return to the full implementation of the New START Treaty and commence negotiations on its successor.

The accelerated implementation of commitments under the NPT can also contribute to undergirding international stability. I therefore appeal to all States parties to the NPT to fully adhere to their obligations under the Treaty and to immediately engage in serious efforts to reduce nuclear risk and de-escalate tensions.

**The President:** I thank Mrs. Nakamitsu for her briefing.

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements.

**Mr. Hoxha** (Albania): I thank Mrs. Nakamitsu for her remarks.

Russia's latest provocative announcement of its intention to transfer tactical nuclear weapons to another country, Belarus, would be troubling news at any time. But given the war of aggression it is relentlessly pursuing in Ukraine, it translates into a clear and irresponsible threat. After placing nuclear weapons on war alert in February 2022, engaging in deterrent exercises in October 2022 and the suspension of

obligations under the New START Treaty last February, the latest statement is unfortunately coherent with the current irresponsible policy of Russia in its persistent stubborn course to continue threatening its neighbours and further endanger regional and global security.

Stating that Russia does not respect agreements and commitments has become just an understatement. It has shown that it does not respect the Charter of the United Nations and that international law is optional — only if it suits its ambitions. Most egregious, among many other examples, is the 1994 Budapest Memorandum. But since February 2022, Russia has violated countless pieces of international law and Security Council resolutions and continues to disregard a direct call by the International Court of Justice to halt its invasion of Ukraine. It is now undermining the nuclear disarmament architecture and the international security system in general.

Belarus, which has already served in full complicity as a base for Russian troops during the attack on Ukraine, is now preparing to receive Russian tactical nuclear weapons on its territory. It will be for the citizens of Belarus to evaluate if that reversal in the Russian nuclear policy will make them more secure or just turn their country into a nuclear hostage, becoming more and more a Russian appendix. Sviatlana Tsihanuskaya, the winner of the last elections and leader of the democratic forces of Belarus, has qualified it as an act against the will of the people, one that undermines the sovereignty of Belarus.

But beyond what this may mean for the sovereignty and the future of Belarus, this constitutes another unnecessary and unjustified instance of irresponsible behaviour meant to instil fear, primarily among the European public. The justification provided by Belarus that it needs such weapons to protect itself against NATO is just laughable.

Threatening an apocalypse, as the Kremlin is so fond of doing, is always dangerous and unsettling. But yielding the nuclear threat seems to have become the Russian joker every time they are stalled on the ground. Failing to have anything worth announcing in terms of success and to fuel their nationalist flame-throwers, picking up on the nuclear threat looks like the painkiller at hand.

After all, the terrifying prospect of nuclear war easily and understandably overshadows the painful reality of thousands of body bags returning home, of mothers crying for their missing sons, of soldiers

complaining on social media about the unfit conditions they find themselves in, or of the voices of reason, who end up in prison, like the 13-year-old girl Maria, who finds herself in forced child care, separated from her father, who was convicted to two years in prison for an innocent drawing of his child.

As we all know, threatening with fears of nuclear conflict, which is precisely what Russia is doing, undermines the basis and principles of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the nuclear disarmament architecture and the international security system as a whole. It brings back the mentality of the Cold War through nuclear blackmail. It is as wrong as the unlawful illegal transfer of the Iranian killing drones or the illegal transfer of weapons from North Korea.

Be they tactical or strategic, nuclear weapons are all deadly weapons of mass destruction that should never be used. Let us remind ourselves of the declaration by the leaders of the five nuclear-weapon States not too long ago, in January 2022, which states that a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought. The same declaration also underlines the shared desire

“to work with all States to create a security environment more conducive to progress on disarmament with the ultimate goal of a world without nuclear weapons with undiminished security for all”.

That desire seems to have vanished in Russia since, with their action, they are not working for disarmament but, to the contrary, they are contributing to proliferation, which contradicts its role as a permanent member of the Security Council.

We reiterate our firm condemnation of the ongoing war, which is wrong, unjust and unjustifiable. We reiterate our call for the war to stop immediately. But until then, our collective efforts to deal with the consequences of this aggression must continue. Our determination to help Ukraine defend itself must not weaken. And we must stay firm in our resolve to hold to account those who commit crimes and threaten the world with nuclear weapons.

We express our full solidarity with Ukraine and the admirable resilience of its people, who deserve no less than to live in freedom, in their country, by their choosing and in their territory within their internationally recognized borders.

**Mr. Wood** (United States of America): I thank the High Representative for her informative and sobering briefing this morning.

It is unfortunate that this meeting was necessary today, but President Putin is escalating Russia's dangerous and destabilizing behaviour by threatening to deploy nuclear weapons in Belarus. He has once again reminded the world of his disregard for international law, including the Charter of the United Nations. Russia's suggestion that that intended deployment is somehow justified because of the use of armour-piercing ammunition is ludicrous. To state the obvious: armour-piercing ammunition is in no way analogous to tactical nuclear weapons. Viewing the Kremlin's announcement in the context of the totality of Russia's behaviour, it becomes quite clear that that announcement has nothing to do with an ammunition type — one that, by the way, has been in use for decades and that Russia itself possesses — rather, it has everything to do with the Kremlin's attempts to limit and deter international security assistance for Ukraine's defence of its sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity. The reality is that the Kremlin does not want Ukraine to possess the capability to defend itself against Russia's tanks.

But let us recall a simple, immutable fact: Russia's tanks would not come into contact with those armour-piercing munitions if Russia's tanks were not within Ukraine's sovereign territory in the first place. It would not be necessary to supply Ukraine with defensive weapons and equipment if Russia had not launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine. And now, through completely irresponsible rhetoric and continued disinformation, Russia seeks to escalate its unprovoked war against Ukraine rather than to seek peace.

President Putin's 25 March announcement noting intentions to forward-deploy nuclear weapons to Belarus is not about nuclear burden-sharing. There are no credible defence-related reasons for Russia to station nuclear weapons in Belarus. Lukashenko continues to provide material and logistical support to Russia's military and for months has parroted Russia's irresponsible and false narrative of provocation. The Lukashenko regime paved the way for Putin's decision on 25 March by enacting a series of constitutional changes in February 2022, against the will of most Belarusians, to enable Russia's stationing of nuclear weapons in Belarus.

Indeed, Russia appears willing to break its promises whenever it suits President Putin's interests. Less than a fortnight ago, President Putin committed, in a joint statement with China, to effectively reduce the risk of nuclear war and cynically stated that

“nuclear-weapons States should refrain from deploying nuclear weapons abroad and withdraw nuclear weapons deployed abroad”.

Putin's continued disregard for his promises to his friends, for Russia's international obligations and commitments and his willingness to sacrifice strategic stability to achieve his goals in Ukraine is a risk to the Council's agenda regarding the maintenance of international peace and security.

It was Russia's decisions that led to the termination of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty in 2019. Through its full-scale invasion of Ukraine, Russia has further contravened its commitments under the 1994 Budapest Memorandum. Last year it was Russia, and Russia alone, that decided to block consensus on a final document at the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

Since then, Russia has strayed even further from the implementation of its arms control obligations, with its purported suspension of participation in the 2010 New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty. Not only was that legally invalid, but it demonstrates an increasingly disturbing trend of Russia's reliance on nuclear weapons and provocative nuclear rhetoric to intimidate those prepared to help Ukraine provide for its legitimate self-defence. The Kremlin is attempting to manipulate the spectre of nuclear conflict to help win its illegal war against Ukraine, while it further tramples on the Charter of the United Nations.

In the face of those violations, it is unfortunate that some on the Council have chosen a policy of ignoring Russia's aggression against the Ukrainian people by refusing to acknowledge Russia's dangerous actions or condemn its violations of the principles of the United Nations Charter. Those who have chosen that path enable further violations by Russia, exacerbating the conflict and moving us all further away from peace by turning a blind eye to the cause of this conflict, which is Russia's armed invasion of Ukraine. No legitimate path to peace can stem from a refusal to recognize the facts.

No other country is inflicting such damage on arms control or seeking to undermine strategic stability in Europe. No other country has raised the prospect

of potential nuclear use in connection with the war in Ukraine. No other country is increasing nuclear deployments in Europe or issuing implied threats of use. No country is threatening Russia or threatening President Putin. Putin's war against Ukraine is one that the Kremlin could end in a moment if it chooses. That it deliberately chooses not to is telling, as are the actions of those who would criticize Ukraine for defending its sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence.

In the light of the international community's overwhelming support for peace, as demonstrated by last month's General Assembly vote (see A/ES-11/PV.19) on a just and lasting peace, we call on Russia to reconsider its intentions to forward-deploy nuclear weapons to Belarus and once again call on Russia to withdraw its troops from Ukraine. Russia should immediately cease escalatory rhetoric around the potential use of nuclear weapons. Any use of chemical, biological or nuclear weapons in Ukraine would have severe consequences for the maintenance of international peace and security and would fundamentally change the nature of this war. And any use of nuclear weapons would break the record of non-use of such weapons, which has held for nearly 80 years. We also call on the Lukashenko regime to cease its complicity in Russia's war against Ukraine. And we again call on Russia to de-escalate, starting with the cessation of its war of aggression against Ukraine.

**Mr. Hauri** (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this meeting. We also thank the Under-Secretary-General, Mrs. Izumi Nakamitsu, for her briefing.

Switzerland notes with concern the announcement by Russia that it intends to deploy nuclear weapons in Belarus. Such statements are troubling, especially when they come from a party to an international armed conflict, and concretely from Russia during its military aggression against Ukraine.

If Russia were to establish a nuclear-sharing system, that would contradict its repeated condemnations of that practice, including during the tenth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). The announcement also raises questions about the commitments made in the context of the NPT, notably to implement measures leading to nuclear disarmament, including the reduction and elimination of such weapons. All nuclear-weapon States are required to advance disarmament and reduce nuclear risks. Furthermore, we also call on Belarus

to show responsibility and refrain from hosting those weapons on its territory.

Any use of nuclear weapons would have catastrophic humanitarian consequences and risk uncontrolled escalation. Whether intentionally or through miscalculation, misunderstanding or accident, any such escalation must be avoided. Switzerland calls on all States with nuclear weapons to reduce their role in military and security doctrines. We condemn any kind of nuclear threats made by Russia in the context of its military aggression against Ukraine. We all have a shared responsibility to preserve the NPT as the cornerstone of the international nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime, which is fundamental to achieving a world free of such weapons.

I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate Switzerland's concern about the continued erosion of the nuclear arms control system. We are worried about Russia's decision to suspend its participation in New START Treaty. We now note the announcement by the United States to limit notifications on its side. Switzerland calls on the parties to redouble their efforts to conclude a new agreement before the expiry of this last bilateral nuclear-weapons treaty in 2026.

We call on all States to work towards nuclear disarmament, as well as the reduction of the risks associated with nuclear weapons, and to reaffirm and strengthen the role and responsibility of the Security Council. In that context, we recall the joint statement by the permanent members of the Council in early 2022 that a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought.

**Mr. Biang** (Gabon) (*spoke in French*): I thank Mrs. Nakamitsu for her briefing.

We are particularly concerned by recent reports of Russia's deployment of tactical nuclear weapons in Belarus, one month after the suspension of its participation in the bilateral New START Treaty. This information intersects with that relating to massive arms deliveries to Ukraine. Obviously, we are facing a dangerous turning point in the war in which the use of nuclear weapons appears increasingly to be an option. Whether it serves as a deterrent or in the service of belligerents' propaganda, the rhetoric on resort to nuclear weapons gives rise to the worst fears for the world, and in particular for people in the throes of the conflict, who continue to pay the highest cost.

These developments run counter to the international nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation goals prescribed by the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). They are also a setback to efforts to make the world safer by eradicating the nuclear threat, as well as a contradictory and difficult to decipher signal to non-nuclear-weapon States. Above all, this trend to trivialize nuclear weapons and the show of force is perilous for humankind. History records that the ravages brought about by this category of weapon has horrible and irreparable consequences.

My country will never support the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons, or of any other weapon of mass destruction. We reiterate our opposition to this senseless war, which has gone on long enough. After 13 months of destructive and deadly fighting, the Council must be the epicentre of new ideas on how to emerge from the conflict and develop concrete prospects for negotiations and on a commitment by the parties to silence the guns and bring peace and security to Ukraine. My country again calls on the warring parties to respect international law and refrain from any heinous action that could prolong the war. Exacerbating the suffering by continuing to raise the spectre of destruction is untenable. The channels of diplomacy must supplant the risky wagers of brute force, and peaceful coexistence must prevail over the mindset of confrontation.

**Mr. Geng Shuang** (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I would like to begin by thanking High Representative Nakamitsu for her briefing.

Nuclear weapons are the sword of Damocles hanging over our heads. China's position on the issue of nuclear weapons has been clear and consistent. Since its first day in possession of nuclear weapons, China has firmly committed to a defensive nuclear strategy and honoured the pledge of no first use of nuclear weapons at any time under any circumstances. China has also made a clear and unconditional commitment not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States or nuclear-weapon-free zones. China is the only nuclear-weapon State to have made those pledges. China attaches great importance to the status of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, as the cornerstone of international nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation. We firmly support the authority, effectiveness and universal nature of the Treaty and advocate a step-by-step approach to advancing the nuclear disarmament process for the eventual complete ban and total elimination of

nuclear weapons. We call for the abolition of nuclear-sharing arrangements and oppose the deployment by all nuclear-weapon States of nuclear weapons abroad. We support the withdrawal of nuclear weapons deployed abroad.

Mutual trust and cooperation among major countries are the fundamental guarantee for maintaining global strategic stability. In January last year, the leaders of the five nuclear-weapon States issued a joint statement emphasizing that a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought. The statement reaffirmed that no nuclear weapons are pointed at other nuclear-weapon States or at any other State. Against the backdrop of the current tense relations among nuclear-weapon States, the special significance of that historic statement is all the more significant. China calls on all nuclear-weapon States to abide by the intent of that statement, effectively reduce the risk of a nuclear war and avoid any armed conflict between nuclear-weapon States.

China's position on the Ukraine issue is also clear and consistent. China recently issued a paper entitled "China's position on the political settlement of the Ukraine crisis", which laid out in full its position and proposals, including with respect to opposing armed attacks against nuclear power plants or other nuclear facilities used for peaceful purposes, while emphasizing that nuclear weapons must not be used and nuclear wars must not be fought; that the threat or use of nuclear weapons should be opposed; and that nuclear proliferation must be prevented and a nuclear crisis avoided. Recent events have once again made it clear that the resumption of dialogue and negotiation and the promotion of a political settlement should occur sooner rather than later. All parties must remain rational and exercise restraint; avoid increasing tensions, intensifying friction or fanning the flames; stop all actions that could contribute to a prolongation of the war; and prevent the crisis from deteriorating further or spiralling out of control.

The international community should have a heightened sense of the urgency of promoting peace talks and creating the conditions for a prompt resumption of negotiations. China will continue to play a constructive role in seeking a ceasefire to end the conflict, alleviate the crisis and restore peace.

**Mr. Camilleri** (Malta): I thank High Representative Nakamitsu for her clear and sobering briefing today on this important issue.

At the outset, I want to insist on Malta's unwavering commitment to nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament and to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, which remains the cornerstone of the nuclear non-proliferation regime. We are convinced that is the only path to follow if we want to secure peace and prosperity and a safer future for all. There are no winners in a nuclear war. We would all be losers in such a confrontation, and the devastating humanitarian consequences and environmental fallout would be felt for generations to come. Malta strongly condemns any nuclear threats or dangerous nuclear rhetoric. Such acts undermine the vital role of the global non-proliferation regime and disregard the tragic consequences that would result from a nuclear detonation.

As members of the international community, we have a responsibility to make sure that a nuclear war is never fought. Since the beginning of Russia's aggression against Ukraine just over one year ago, the world has held its breath as Russia conducts reckless military activity within and around the civilian nuclear facilities in Ukraine and continues to occupy Europe's largest nuclear power plant in Zaporizhzhya, creating a significant risk of a radiological incident. For more than a year, international peace and security has been threatened as the world has been subjected to unacceptable Russian nuclear threats against its neighbour — an independent, sovereign, non-nuclear-weapon State that voluntarily gave up the nuclear arsenal that was left on its territory almost 30 years ago. Ukraine did that in good faith and in exchange for security assurances from Russia — assurances that were betrayed. Furthermore, just a few weeks ago, Russia declared that it would suspend its participation in the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty, its last remaining nuclear arms control agreement with the United States. Such actions threaten millions of civilians in Ukraine, the region and beyond. Needless to say, the devastating humanitarian and environmental consequences of nuclear weapons would not be confined within national borders or to the European continent.

The war is already having ramifications for global food security, which we are trying to contain by means of a fragile mechanism. We can only begin to imagine the multiplier effect and catastrophic consequences if nuclear weapons were added to the equation. Moreover, let us not forget that the vast majority of States, including many developing countries, have fought hard to make progress on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. Instead, we have been plunged back into a situation in

which a nuclear disaster is within the realm of possibility. At the start of 2022, the five permanent members of the Council, including the Russian Federation, reiterated their important declaration that a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought. Russia's reckless nuclear rhetoric contradicts that declaration.

We urge Belarus to fully understand the consequences and repercussions of its actions should it choose to accommodate Russia's plans. We stress the fact that the storage or deployment of Russian nuclear weapons in Belarus would raise nuclear tensions, gravely compromise international peace and security, increase the risk of a nuclear accident or miscommunication and drastically increase the possibility of an escalation to nuclear war. Such risks are unacceptable. They should never be considered, let alone taken.

Our discussion today is yet another direct and dreadful consequence of Russia's illegal, unjustified and unprovoked war against Ukraine. Once again, Malta reiterates its call on the Russian Federation to immediately cease its war of aggression and withdraw all its forces from Ukraine's internationally recognized borders. At this juncture, the last thing we should do is raise the stakes even higher.

**Mr. Kariuki** (United Kingdom): I thank High Representative Nakamitsu for her sobering briefing.

As others have also pointed out, in January 2022 the leaders of the five permanent members of the Security Council said that a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought. They also said that nuclear weapons, for as long as they continue to exist, should serve defensive purposes, deter aggression and prevent war. Despite that commitment, since the beginning of Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine President Putin has used irresponsible nuclear rhetoric. Let us be clear. No other country has raised the prospect of nuclear use in that conflict. No one is threatening Russia's sovereignty. It is Russia that has violated the Charter of the United Nations by invading another sovereign country.

President Putin's announcement on 25 March is his latest attempt to intimidate and coerce. It has not worked, and it will not work. We will continue to support Ukraine in defending itself. We have heard President Putin's claim that the trigger for that announcement was the fact that the United Kingdom was supplying depleted uranium munitions to Ukraine alongside Challenger tanks, as Ukraine defends itself in accordance with Article 51 of the Charter of the United

Nations. Russia is well aware that this is conventional ammunition, not nuclear munitions, and it is yet another example of Russia deliberately trying to mislead.

We welcome President Xi Jinping's call for the international community to jointly oppose the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. I listened carefully to our Chinese colleague today. We also note the Chinese and Russian joint statement that nuclear weapons should not be deployed abroad. Despite those statements of intent, Russia has steadily undermined the arms-control architecture underpinning our collective security. Russia's persistent violations of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty resulted in the Treaty's collapse in 2019, and this year Russia suspended its participation in the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty.

President Lukashenko has made no secret of his wish to see Russia base nuclear weapons in Belarus. We urge him to stop enabling Russia's reckless and escalatory actions. We will stand firm in our support to the people of Ukraine and call on Russia to de-escalate. It should start by ceasing its illegal and unprovoked invasion.

**Mr. Agyeman** (Ghana): I would like to begin by thanking High Representative Nakamitsu for addressing the Council this morning and for the clarity of her briefing.

In all the previous meetings of the Council on Ukraine, Ghana has been consistent in underlining the necessity of the Russian Federation ending its assault on the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine as a basis for seeking a political solution to the conflict. We reiterate our principled position that the ongoing aggression constitutes a serious violation of international law and contravenes the prohibition of the use of force under Article 2, paragraph 4 of the Charter of the United Nations.

As the war in Ukraine rages on with no immediate end in sight, the humanitarian toll — which has largely been characterized by forced displacement and the deaths of thousands — continues compounding. We remain concerned about the horrifying destruction of civilian infrastructure, including schools and hospitals, resulting from the military hostilities. We reiterate our strong condemnation of all such deliberate attacks on civilians and critical infrastructure. We renew our reminder to the warring parties that they have an obligation to respect international humanitarian law and international human rights law, and we draw

attention to the consequences of accountability that violations entail.

While it is the Ukrainian people who have primarily borne the brunt of that brutal war, its repercussions reverberate far beyond the borders of their country. For many countries in the global South, there is great concern about the current state of affairs and the lack of capacity of the global economic system to respond to the overwhelming needs in their societies. As we meet, it is imperative to acknowledge that the ongoing war is undermining relations between States and creating disruptive and undesirable consequences. We must therefore redouble our efforts to bring the warring parties to the table of dialogue and diplomacy, including by supporting every potential green shoot for peace.

The strategic risks arising from deliberate actions or miscalculations in the war in Ukraine are real and should not be discounted. As a country, we have always stood against the possession of nuclear weapons and opposed the emerging strategic doctrines for the modernization of arsenals, the tactical use of nuclear weapons and all such modifying measures by nuclear-weapon States. All of us should be aware of the danger that arises when we blur the threshold for the use of nuclear weapons and the abyss into which it can drive the world. We must pull back and change course.

Accordingly, we urge the protagonists and all actors to exercise maximum restraint and remain mindful of their disarmament commitments and nuclear non-proliferation obligations. It should not be lost on anyone that the nuclear non-proliferation regime — one of the cornerstones of today's global peace and security architecture — requires the oxygen of good faith, dialogue, trust and confidence-building to thrive.

Our concerns continue to deepen about the mobilization of massive military and other strategic assets to engage in a greater war. As we have stated before and repeat firmly today, the projections of military logic as a basis for the settlement of this conflict portend great difficulties. We continue to advocate for a peaceful settlement of the dispute through the pursuit of negotiations on the basis of the Charter of the United Nations and international law. We note the serious ongoing engagements to unite the parties around certain principles for mediation efforts and encourage the constructive engagement of the parties. We would also encourage all countries that are able to exert positive influence on the warring parties

to urge them to refrain from repudiating prospective peace initiatives and proposals.

In conclusion, Ghana reaffirms its deep commitment to the sovereignty, political independence and territorial integrity of Ukraine. We reiterate our solidarity with the people of Ukraine and offer them our support in a hopeful peace effort.

**Mr. Nebenzia** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank High Representative Nakamitsu for her briefing.

Today we have heard a number of critical remarks directed at our country. We are not surprised by the overall logic expressed by our former Western partners, which is that Russia is to blame for all of the ills of today's world. However, since we are discussing serious matters here that have a bearing on the security of our entire planet, I would like to explain where the real threat to peace and stability is coming from. Incidentally, we were struck by the reference to the letter from Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, the so-called head of the united transitional cabinet and leader of the democratic forces of Belarus. We could make a similarly successful reference to Juan Guaidó Márquez that would sound no less authoritative in this Chamber.

In the past few years the global security architecture has been seriously eroding. At the initiative of the United States and its allies who proclaimed themselves to be the victors in the Cold War, the process began of the systematic, consistent destruction and dismantling of key agreements in the areas of arms control and confidence-building, unprovoked by any acts on our part. It was dictated exclusively by the desire of the United States to cement its own geopolitical domination and to obstruct the objective process of the emergence of a multipolar world. We reaffirm that a nuclear war can have no winners, as was stated in the joint statement by the leaders of Russia and the United States. However, we recall the dynamics and fate of treaties in the area of strategic stability.

In 2003, Washington unilaterally terminated the Treaty between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on the Limitation of Anti-Ballistic Missile Systems. The same fate was reserved for other major strategic agreements. In 2019, it was the United States that withdrew from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF Treaty), and not Russia, as the United States representative falsely told us today. If one looks at the statements at

that time, they leave no doubt about who initiated the withdrawal from the INF Treaty. If the United States has forgotten that, we can recall the sequence of steps and who initiated the collapse of that treaty.

Washington's policy of destroying the Treaty on Open Skies ended with the unilateral withdrawal of the United States from it in 2020. The United States has consistently violated the provisions of the Treaty on Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms, in connection with which Russia decided to suspend the Treaty on February 21 this year. And neither has resolution 2231 (2015), which endorses the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, from which the United States unilaterally withdrew in 2018, stopped Washington from undermining crucial agreements on Iran's nuclear programme. With regard to international agreements on the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, we also recall that the United States refused to ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, has not yet fulfilled its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention and is also blocking strengthening the Biological Weapons Convention regime by preventing the adoption of a legally binding protocol with an effective verification mechanism.

As for the European continent, back in the early 2000s, the United States refused to ratify the Agreement on adaptation of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe, thereby destroying the foundations of pan-European security and predictability in the military sphere. It should be recalled that in 1999, the Charter for European Security was signed, which enshrined the principle of indivisible security and the obligation not to strengthen one's security at the expense of others. However, the subsequent expansion of NATO to the east and the inclusion of countries of eastern Europe in the NATO orbit put an end to that principle.

Finally, we would also like to remind those present that, in 2021, we initiated the Russian-United States comprehensive strategic stability dialogue, during which we were supposed to consider all security issues and identify possible ways to resolve them through political and diplomatic means, including arms control mechanisms. However, our proposals to that end were rejected by the Americans. A similar fate befell the Russian proposals for building a European security architecture in full compliance with the principles reaffirmed within the framework of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). The

subsequent revelations by Western politicians that they never intended to build an equal partnership with our country directly attest to the true nature of the promises that they made at that time.

We see no objective reasons for convening today's meeting, especially at the initiative of the United States. In the 1990s, Russia made every effort to withdraw nuclear weapons from the countries of the former Soviet Union to its territory. We have repeatedly urged the Americans to do the same — to abandon the Cold War mindset and return all United States nuclear weapons to its national territory, which, incidentally, is also stated in the joint statement by the leaders of China and Russia, to which several delegations readily referred today.

We also called for the dismantling of the relevant infrastructure in Europe and for an end to the practice of long-standing violations by the United States and other NATO members of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) through the so-called joint nuclear missions. We have repeatedly openly stated that such a practice is not compatible with either the letter or the spirit of the NPT and urged NATO countries to bring their policies into line with their commitments. Let us recall that, in accordance with article I of the NPT, its nuclear-weapon States parties undertook not to transfer to anyone nuclear weapons or other nuclear-explosive devices, or control over such weapons or explosive devices, directly or indirectly. In turn, non-nuclear countries, in accordance with article II of the Treaty, undertook obligations not to accept the transfer of such control from anyone, either directly or indirectly.

We, in turn, are building cooperation with Belarus without violating our international obligations regarding the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. President Putin explicitly pointed out that we are not transferring nuclear weapons. We are talking about transferring the Iskander-M operational tactical missile system to the Republic of Belarus, re-equipping aircraft of the Belarusian air force, training crews and building a special storage facility for tactical nuclear weapons on the territory of Belarus, which will be under the control of Russia.

According to various estimates, between 100 and 150 American tactical nuclear bombs can already be deployed as part of nuclear cooperation among NATO countries in Europe. Moreover, the modernization of both those stockpiles and potential nuclear-weapon

delivery vehicles is only gaining momentum. The exact location of the United States nuclear weapons has not been disclosed. There are reports that they are deployed in the Netherlands, Belgium, Italy, Germany and Turkey, but one should not forget the legacy of the Cold War. The respective storage facilities are located on the territory of other States, for example Greece. In recent years, there have been calls to expand the network of American nuclear weapons storage sites in Europe towards the borders of the Union State of Russia and Belarus. We recall that, as recently as last October, the leadership of Poland publicly announced that it was negotiating that country's participation in "joint nuclear missions".

Against the background of NATO's openly declared desire to inflict a "strategic defeat" on Russia, it is obvious that such actions require us to take all necessary reciprocal steps, including in the military sphere, to ensure the security of the Union State of Russia and Belarus. That is precisely the direction of the measures announced by the President of Russia, which so frightened the Zelenskyy regime and its Western supporters. Or did they seriously expect that we would not properly respond to their provocative and aggressive actions?

The concern about global stability on the part of Western countries looks extremely hypocritical even against the background of their provocative activities outside Europe. The establishment of the so-called United States-United Kingdom-Australia security partnership and the declared plans to build nuclear submarines in that context raises many questions, not only for us, but also for other States. As we have repeatedly noted, the establishment of that bloc generally provokes tensions, undermines efforts to maintain peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region and sets the stage for the start of a new arms race. However, the Americans and their allies, as we know, have never been deterred by such considerations. They are only concerned about maintaining their own geopolitical superiority.

However, such duplicity no longer surprises us. The Ukrainian crisis has clearly demonstrated it, and the interests of the Ukrainians themselves have never been taken into account by Western countries. A recent egregious example is London's decision to supply Kyiv with armour-piercing shells containing depleted uranium. We all know for certain the dire impact of using such toxic munitions on areas where they were

used. Such an impact was fully felt by victims of the invasion of Yugoslavia and Iraq by Western States, and the consequences of the use of such munitions are still being felt. It would seem that the Kyiv regime, which allegedly cares about ordinary Ukrainians, itself should have resolutely refused such a gift in order not to endanger the civilian population and avoid future contamination of the land.

The representative of the United States used the chain of reasoning that Russian tanks would not be coming into contact with depleted uranium shells if Russia had not committed, as he said, aggression against Ukraine. I would like to elaborate on that assertion.

Russian tanks would not be in Ukraine and Ukrainian soldiers would not be dying for foreign political interests if the United States and its allies had not conducted an anti-constitutional coup d'état in Kyiv in 2014; if they had not brought Russophobes, nationalists and Nazis to power in Ukraine; if the United States and its allies had not armed that group and prepared them for war against Russia, under the cover of the Minsk agreements; and if they had not covered up their crimes against Russian speakers in eastern and southern Ukraine. Ukraine would have known peace long ago if the United States and its allies were not pumping the Kyiv regime with weapons and forcing it to send thousands of conscripts into this senseless slaughter. That is the sole objective, and the West uses it to justify the allocation of funds to Ukraine. This assertion will be more accurate.

However, we have long known that the Kyiv authorities have shelled civilians in the Donbas for years, continue to use Western weapons against their own civilians and are misanthropic and servile towards the West. Their indifference to their own population and their European neighbours was fully demonstrated in the situation around the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant, which the Armed Forces of Ukraine have repeatedly shelled, despite the risk of a full-scale disaster at the largest nuclear power plant in Europe. Western countries have also known about that for a long time too, but they have been hypocritically silent about it. The pinnacle of their hypocrisy was their attempt to present themselves as champions of peace, while flooding the Kyiv regime with weapons, and the statements from Washington and European capitals that it was unacceptable to pursue a ceasefire in Ukraine. I would remind members that all that was in response to recent international initiatives to resolve the situation,

which Russia, on the contrary, welcomes. I am not talking about the so-called peace plan presented by Zelenskyy, though.

The collective West is unprincipled and inconsistent towards the situation in Ukraine and other international problems. That clearly illustrates the essence of the so-called “rules-based order”, which has nothing to do with international law. Western countries are simply trying to impose their own self-serving rules on the rest of the world and then demand that other countries strictly comply with them. They themselves do not of course consider themselves bound by any obligations. Such inherently neocolonial attitudes, which are aimed at ensuring the prosperity of the so-called “golden billion” at all costs, cannot mislead us or our colleagues from developing countries, not anymore. They are as disingenuous and unconvincing as the attempts to shift the blame for undermining strategic stability onto Russia. The sooner the collective West understands that and embarks on a serious dialogue — on equal principles of indivisible global and European security — the better the chances will be of avoiding new urgent problems and crises.

**Mr. Costa Filho (Brazil):** At the outset, I would like to thank Izumi Nakamitsu for her briefing.

Last year, during the tenth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), we found ourselves often repeating that we were disappointed with the lack of ambition in the goals set for nuclear disarmament. Several times we were told by nuclear-weapon States that the best we could hope for was to confirm existing disarmament commitments in order to prevent backsliding on nuclear disarmament. Since then, we have failed to meet even that extremely low bar. By now it seems clear that nuclear disarmament has gone into reverse. All nuclear-weapon States are upgrading their arsenals, either quantitatively or qualitatively or both. In addition, they are developing new means of delivery. Coupled with the accelerating global missile race from East Asia to the Middle East to Eastern Europe, it is no exaggeration to say that nuclear risks are at their highest levels since the Cold War. Even more worrisome, as compared to that period we now have more actors involved with more delivery systems and fewer rules in place.

When Brazil ratified the NPT in 1998, its Parliament expressed the understanding that the decision to join the Treaty was inextricably linked to the fulfilment of

article VI disarmament obligations — and I stress the word “obligations” — by nuclear-weapon States. The Treaty can be seen as legitimate only when all parties comply in good faith with all their obligations. The Treaty does not set any preconditions for disarmament and does not say that disarmament shall be contingent on the security environment. On the contrary, it is our view that it is disarmament that shapes the security environment and not the other way around. Yet article VI is not the only article of the NPT that has not been fully observed. Brazil has long maintained that any nuclear-sharing arrangement is inconsistent with both articles I and II of the NPT. We are not persuaded by arguments that seek to carve loopholes around NPT language, such as those suggesting that, as long as there is no handover of command and control of the weapons, nuclear-sharing arrangements would not constitute a transfer, or that the pre-existing arrangements that were not in line with the provisions of the NPT could be grandfathered into the Treaty, among other arguments. The text of those articles is clear, and their intent is clearer.

We take both of those articles very seriously, and we have long opposed any nuclear-sharing arrangements. While we have expressed our concerns about NATO'S nuclear-sharing arrangements, we also stress that two wrongs do not make a right. Reacting to a nuclear-sharing arrangement or to any other perceived nuclear threat by placing weapons in a non-nuclear-weapon State also constitutes a breach of NPT obligations. Responding to violations with violations seems to have become the prevailing logic in arms control today. Over the course of the past year, we have seen countless disappointing incidents in which withdrawals or suspensions of obligations on one side were answered with tit-for-tat withdrawals or suspensions of obligations by the other side. We have seen it with the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, with the Open Skies Treaty and more recently with the New START Treaty. That is a race to the bottom that makes nobody safer, regardless of who made the first move. By shutting down channels of communication, increasing uncertainty and reducing trust, the world is being made less secure for nuclear-weapon States and non-nuclear-weapon States alike. The backsliding on nuclear disarmament must stop before it renders the NPT a dead letter. I urge all of us in the Security Council — especially the nuclear-weapon States — to recommit to arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation and to live up to all of their NPT obligations.

In other areas of international law, a suspension of obligations may at times be the appropriate response to a treaty violation. In the areas of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, that should never be the case, first, because that suspension, in itself, may violate the NPT's Article VI obligation to curb a nuclear arms race and engage in disarmament, and secondly, and perhaps more importantly, because the risks in this area are higher than those in almost any other area. Tit-for-tat breaches of obligations in nuclear arms control and disarmament threaten to set off unpredictable arms-race processes that greatly increase the risks of voluntary and involuntary escalation.

Violations, be they nuclear-sharing arrangements or breaches of other treaties, must be answered with concerted efforts to remedy the breach and bring all parties back into full compliance. Let us step back from the brink and do what we must: all parties must re-establish dialogue, restore existing arms-control and disarmament mechanisms and work towards new ones that will permit them to fully comply with all their NPT obligations.

**Mr. Montalvo Sosa** (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I am grateful for the decision to convene today's meeting requested by Ukraine, and I also appreciate the briefing by High Representative for Disarmament Affairs Izumi Nakamitsu.

Ecuador's well-known historical position is that there are no safe hands for nuclear weapons, as these weapons' very existence challenges the survival of humankind and entails serious humanitarian concerns and consequences that can only be resolved through their total elimination.

A few days after the military aggression against Ukraine began, specifically on 1 March 2022, 13 countries active in nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation efforts, including Ecuador, issued a joint communiqué rejecting the orders given at that time by the Russian Federation to place nuclear-deterrence forces on high alert, and we called on that country to take urgent action for nuclear disarmament. Today, one year later, we regret that the Russian Federation's narrative and actions, rather than alleviating global concerns, have continued to escalate as they have. We urge an end to any action involving a nuclear threat, taking into account the potential fallout for the region and the world from any misinterpretation or miscalculation. We also regret Russia's announcement in February to suspend its participation in the New

START strategic arms reduction treaty, and we urge it to resume its obligations within the framework of the international security architecture.

As part of the first densely populated nuclear-weapon-free zone, established by the Treaty of Tlatelolco, and as a State party to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, Ecuador considers any deployment of such weapons to be a violation of international law. For this reason, we reject nuclear weapons wherever they are located, and we reject their modernization. We also deplore the fact that four days after the military aggression against Ukraine began, Belarus organized a referendum to promote the removal of its nuclear-weapon-free status from its Constitution, and now intends to accept the deployment of tactical nuclear weapons on its territory, in violation of the international non-proliferation architecture.

We also condemn in the strongest terms the Russian Federation's announcement to deploy tactical nuclear weapons in Belarus, to the detriment of its international obligations in this regard, which is all the more alarming in the context of the military aggression it continues to inflict on Ukraine. These actions and the Russian narrative fuel the risk of nuclear war. We call for de-escalation to reduce these risks and avoid any accidents. We once again urge the Russian Federation to end the invasion and return to legality, honouring the security assurances it gave in connection with Ukraine's accession to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

Finally, the Security Council should be guided by the 3 January 2022 joint statement of China, France, the United Kingdom, the United States and Russia itself on the prevention of nuclear war and the importance of avoiding an arms race, in which they further stated, as we have heard in all languages, that "a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought".

**Mr. Abushahab** (United Arab Emirates): I would like to thank High Representative Nakamitsu for her informative briefing.

The conflict in Ukraine has shattered the lives of its citizens and heightened geopolitical tensions to levels not seen since the Cold War era. The countless lives lost and the worsening humanitarian crisis underscore the urgent need for de-escalation. These same realities also call for a re-evaluation of actions that may further exacerbate tensions.

The war has forced the international community to confront the dangers and complexities associated with nuclear weapons, inactive nuclear material and armed conflict at and near the site of a nuclear power plant. The international community has deep concerns about the potential for accidents and miscalculation amid growing tensions and intensifying conflict.

Individually, such activities pose significant risks. Taken together, they perpetuate a dangerously escalatory cycle with potentially unfathomable repercussions. Accordingly, responsible States need not limit themselves to parsing the legality of each individual action when it is the sum total of these actions that brings us ever closer to a nuclear catastrophe.

We must exercise prudence and caution. Sixty years ago, the world waited with bated breath as the Cuban missile crisis brought the world to the brink of nuclear war. The leaders of the countries involved took the decision to engage in dialogue to resolve the stand-off. These decisions also created the conditions for the signing of the world's first nuclear treaty.

Even today, we know dialogue remains possible. Russia and Ukraine's recent agreement to extend the Black Sea Grain Initiative illustrates the benefits of such dialogue. The United Arab Emirates reiterates its gratitude to the Secretary-General and Türkiye for their tireless efforts. We encourage this same spirit to drive more focused diplomacy in other vital areas — most critically, nuclear safety and security. The United Arab Emirates stands ready to support such endeavours.

To go beyond efforts to mitigate the war's impact and to achieve a sustainable and just peace in Ukraine, we must begin to lay the foundation for the conflict's resolution. While the Security Council regularly convenes to address the situation in Ukraine, the only certain way to halt this escalation and prevent tragedy is to find an end to this war. The risks that have us convening today testify to the international community's urgent interest in that outcome.

**Mr. De Rivière** (France) (*spoke in French*): France condemns the agreement between Russia and Belarus to deploy nuclear weapons on the territory of the latter. That is yet another blow to the arms-control architecture, to strategic stability in Europe and to international peace and security. In 2018 Russia began violating the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, which led directly to its demise. It suspended its participation in the New START Treaty in February,

and we urge it to reverse that decision. Russia has repeatedly used aggressive and irresponsible nuclear rhetoric. By announcing its intention to deploy nuclear weapons outside its borders, Russia is once again violating its international commitments, in particular the Budapest Memorandum, and is exacerbating an already unstable situation.

France reaffirms the importance that it attaches to compliance with the joint statement of the permanent members of the Security Council of 3 January 2022, which was endorsed by President Putin, on the prevention of nuclear war and arms races. We should point out that Russia reiterated that commitment in the joint declaration signed with China on March 21, just over a week ago, which states that “[a]ll nuclear-weapon States should refrain from deploying nuclear weapons abroad”. It was signed by Presidents Putin and Xi Jinping nine days ago. Russia must assume the responsibility expected of a nuclear-weapon State. Nuclear weapons have defensive, deterrence and prevention purposes. It is unacceptable to see Russia exploiting the threat of their use for coercive purposes in its war of aggression against Ukraine. France will continue to support Ukraine in defending its sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity. We condemn the use of Belarusian territory as a base and launching pad for Russian strikes on civilian infrastructure in Ukraine and appeal earnestly to Belarus to refrain from taking any further steps in the escalation by rescinding its decision to accept the deployment of nuclear weapons on its territory.

**Mr. Ishikane** (Japan): I thank Under-Secretary-General Nakamitsu for her briefing.

We have consistently called on Russia to cease its aggression against Ukraine, which is a violation of the Charter of the United Nations and international law. Last month, an overwhelming majority of the General Assembly membership called for a halt to the aggression (see A/ES-11/PV.19). However, Russia has ignored the voices of the international community and continued its aggression, and Japan condemns President Putin’s remarks about Russia’s decision to deploy tactical nuclear weapons in Belarus, which will further increase the tensions while Russia continues its aggression against Ukraine. Russia is also abusing its status as a nuclear-weapon State with its irresponsible rhetoric. Japan can never accept Russia’s nuclear threats, let alone any use of nuclear weapons. Other Member States should also refrain from supporting such

actions, directly or indirectly. In February, Russia also announced its suspension of the implementation of the New START Treaty. Japan deeply regrets that decision and calls on Russia to end its suspension of the Treaty and return immediately to its full implementation.

As the only country that has ever suffered atomic bombings during war, Japan is strongly committed to leading international efforts towards a world without nuclear weapons, including the annual General Assembly resolution on the elimination of nuclear weapons. It is regrettable that the final document of the tenth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons was not adopted, owing to the objections of a single country, and all the more so in view of the joint statement of 3 January 2022 by the five permanent members of the Security Council, including Russia. Japan condemns Russia’s threat of using nuclear weapons as a serious and unacceptable menace to the peace and security of the international community. The record 77-year period during which nuclear weapons have not been used must not be interrupted by Russia. All of us here should renew our commitment to working together in order to maintain and strengthen the regime of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and promote nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation as well as arms control.

Japan urges Russia and Belarus to cease any actions that may increase tensions. And we once again stress that Russia must immediately stop its war of aggression and withdraw all of its troops and military equipment from Ukraine.

**The President:** I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Mozambique.

I would like to thank Mrs. Izumi Nakamitsu, High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, for her important briefing.

I recognize and welcome to this Chamber the presence of the Permanent Representatives of Belarus, Estonia, Poland and Ukraine and the Head of Delegation of the European Union.

From the very start of the conflict, Mozambique has consistently warned of the risk of strategic miscalculation and the potential for the war to escalate into a wider and more dangerous conflict. We have followed with concern the numerous developments that pose serious risks to the tenets of the international non-proliferation regime. As we deliberate on this matter, I would like to

draw the attention of Council members to the example set by the African continent in promoting a nuclear-free world and the efforts to establish zones of peace on the continent. In that connection, African States adopted the Treaty of Pelindaba, which established Africa as a nuclear-weapon-free zone. Consequently, our continent does not possess nuclear weapons and is committed to preserving that status. That landmark initiative continues to serve as an example that other regions can emulate, fostering a safer and more secure international community. Let us be clear. A nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought. We therefore call on all the parties involved to engage in constructive dialogue and work together to find peaceful solutions to their security concerns, in line with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, which, among other things, prohibits the use or threat of use of force in international relations. The international community must stand united in its commitment to nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and the promotion of peace and security worldwide. There are simply no other civilized or peaceful options available to us.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

The representative of the United States has asked for the floor to make a further statement.

**Mr. Wood** (United States of America): I apologize for taking the floor again, but I need to respond to some charges that were levelled against the United States by the representative of the Russian Federation. Frankly, there are too many ridiculous charges to respond to. Russia has totally distorted the facts surrounding the unfortunate demise of several treaties, but I will address just a couple of issues that I think are fundamentally important and that were raised.

Regarding the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF Treaty), the United States engaged Russia back in 2013 and made clear that it had evidence that Russia was in violation of the INF Treaty through the deployment of a non-INF-range missile called known as an 9M729. Russia denied the existence of that missile. We worked very hard over the years — myself and a number of my colleagues — to try to convince Russia to come back into compliance with the INF Treaty. In 2017, Russia finally admitted the existence of that missile, but said that it was not outside the INF Treaty range. After much deliberation internally and with allies, the United States decided that Russia was

in material breach of the INF Treaty and therefore subsequently took a step to withdraw from the Treaty, which was extremely unfortunate, but we felt we had no choice but to do that. I just wanted to make sure the record was clear on that.

With regard to the issue of nuclear sharing, that is an issue that was discussed, as the High Representative mentioned, back in the negotiations in the late 1960s with regard to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). Russia at no time fundamentally objected to the arrangements that NATO already had in existence. It signed and ratified the Treaty. It was only after its invasion of Crimea that it decided to look for a reason to get out of the Treaty, or to at least accuse the United States in essence of violating the NPT. And so, for nearly four decades, we heard nothing from Russia about nuclear sharing. So it is quite strange how, after all those years, Russia decided that it had no problems with it until after its invasion of Crimea.

I therefore want to be clear about the issue of nuclear sharing, because it is quite important. The issue of NATO nuclear sharing, as I said, was an issue that was discussed during the negotiations for the NPT. The United States has not violated, and will not violate, the NPT. We are in full compliance with our obligations under the NPT, including article VI — which was raised here. Any suggestions that the United States is in violation of that Treaty are patently false. And the countries that raise that issue need to read the NPT — and the negotiating history of the NPT — which I have read several times. I therefore fundamentally reject that charge.

My last point is that we are here to address specifically Russia's deployment, or planned deployment, of nuclear weapons in Belarus, which is a fundamental threat to international peace and security. And our Russian colleague has not explained in full what is going on with that potential deployment. We therefore call on Russia to adhere to its international obligations with regard to arms control.

**The President:** The representative of the Russian Federation has asked for the floor to make a further statement.

**Mr. Nebenzia** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We do not intend to transform today's meeting into a dialogue between Russia and the United States, but I would like to say a few things.

First of all, I want to thank the representative of the United States for acknowledging just now — contrary to what he said in his official statement — that it was precisely the United States that withdrew from Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty in 2019. Since what we just heard from him is a confirmed fact, we will be sending a letter to the members of the Security Council to describe the sequence of steps that took place at the time, specifying who did what — who the initiator was — and the basis and grounds on which each step was taken.

I just want to refer to a statement from 23 January 2019, when Russia's Ministries of Defence and Foreign Affairs invited foreign military attachés and journalists to a briefing, at which a number of tactical and technical characteristics of the land-based 9M729 cruise missile and its launcher and launch vehicles were demonstrated for the first time. The representatives of the United States and the militaries of a large number of other NATO and European Union member States ignored that invitation. An official representative of the United States Embassy in Moscow told Russia's Interfax news agency that the United States and the majority of its NATO allies declined to attend the briefing, which we all saw as just another attempt to cover up violations and create an appearance of transparency. Then, on 1 February 2019 President Trump announced the start of the United States withdrawal proceedings from the Treaty.

Secondly, I have a question for my American colleague: can he confirm or deny that United States nuclear weapons are not only on United States national territory but also on European territory? Maybe he will dare to answer that question in the Chamber.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Ukraine.

**Mr. Kyslytsya (Ukraine):** Ukraine requested today's meeting following the latest statement by the Russian Federation regarding its intent to station tactical nuclear weapons on the territory of Belarus — which is a non-nuclear-weapon State according to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). That is yet another provocative step by Putin's criminal regime that undermines the basic principles of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation architecture and the international security system as a whole. Such an intention inevitably causes particular concern for the entire international community, with Russia delivering

such statements against the backdrop of its unprovoked war of aggression against Ukraine. Nuclear blackmail is one of the tools that Russia has exploited since the very beginning of the invasion.

In addition, the shelling and seizure of Ukrainian nuclear facilities have also aggravated the nuclear threat at the global level. Today is day 401 of the full-fledged war, and Russia has demonstrated its failure to prevail on the battlefield. In a desperate attempt to avoid the unavoidable — its military defeat in Ukraine — Russia again resorts to waving its nuclear cudgel. The Kremlin is ready to undermine the entire nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation architecture and to threaten the world with nuclear apocalypse, as one of Putin's cronies recently said. But the Kremlin is not ready to halt its violations of the Charter of the United Nations and to return to the tenets of international law.

The announcement we just heard has provided us with yet another solid piece of proof that the papers Putin signs mean nothing to him. Putin prepared for the invasion of Ukraine while signing, in January 2022, the joint statement by the leaders of the five nuclear-weapon States on preventing nuclear war and avoiding arms races. Then, less than two months after Putin committed to the reduction of strategic risks alongside four other leaders, he launched a war that the European continent has not seen since the end of the Second World War.

It took only four days for Putin to violate another pledge that he recently made with the President of the People's Republic of China, in the joint statement on deepening comprehensive strategic partnership of coordination for the new era, signed on 22 March, which declares that all nuclear-weapon States should refrain from deploying nuclear weapons outside their national territories. To the credit of the Chinese side, it reminded Moscow — in a very sensible manner — that a nuclear war cannot be fought and won and that nuclear proliferation must be prevented. Unlike Russia's stance, the Chinese position on nuclear weapons is firm and clear. Let me also remind the Council that Russia was the only country to block the consensus on the final document of the tenth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) in August last year. Last month, Russia announced its decision to suspend its participation in the New START Treaty, one of the pillars of the arms-control architecture.

The Kremlin lies to and disregards even those with whom they claim as friends and strategic partners, which speaks volumes about Russia's readiness to meaningfully and responsibly engage in the de-escalation process and peace efforts. Instead, Russia consolidates its disinformation and creates vague pretexts for nuclear escalation. Following previous false claims about dirty bombs, this time Russia simply explored a certain resemblance between the names of components of weapons of mass destruction and conventional munitions that Ukraine is at liberty to use to exercise its right to self-defence under Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations.

Ukraine has always been a responsible member of the international community. We made an unprecedented contribution to the cause of nuclear disarmament by joining the NPT and signing the 1994 Budapest Memorandum on providing security assurances in connection with Ukraine's accession to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. Ukraine abandoned the world's third-largest nuclear arsenal. However, one of the signatories to the Budapest Memorandum — the Russian Federation — has failed to fulfil its obligations under it.

Now that country is again demonstrating that it perceives nuclear weapons as a tool for threats and intimidation, not a means of deterrence and the prevention of war. It is therefore critically important to ensure that no responsible nations fall for Russia's nuclear sabre-rattling, and to consolidate joint and decisive actions to ensure reliable deterrence and prevent Russia's further erosion of the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation architecture.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Belarus.

**Mr. Rybakov** (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): The Republic of Belarus has been a consistent advocate of the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation processes. The contribution that Belarus has made to global nuclear disarmament is clear and indisputable, and its significance has been repeatedly affirmed in numerous documents agreed at bilateral and multilateral levels. In 1993, Belarus made a conscious choice to renounce nuclear weapons and accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), becoming the first State in the post-Soviet space to voluntarily renounce the possibility of possessing nuclear weapons without any conditions or reservations. In December 1994, the United States,

Russia and the United Kingdom signed a memorandum on security assurances in connection with Belarus's accession to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. In doing that, they undertook an obligation to guarantee Belarus's territorial integrity and sovereignty and to refrain from any coercive political or economic measures.

For a long time now, the Republic of Belarus has been subjected to unprecedented political, economic, financial and informational pressure, in direct violation of the Budapest Memorandum, about which so much has been said here. Trade, visa, banking and other prohibitions and restrictions have been imposed on the Belarusian Government and legal entities and individuals by the United States, the United Kingdom and their NATO allies, as well as by European Union member States. Such bans and restrictions constitute direct and blatant interference in the internal affairs of an independent State and have the clear objective of altering Belarus' geopolitical direction and domestic political order. The unilateral coercive political and economic measures have been accompanied by military build-up in the immediate vicinity of Belarus's borders on the territory of neighbouring NATO member States.

Given the circumstances I mentioned and the resulting legitimate national security concerns and risks, Belarus has been consistent and transparent with its neighbours and the international community in its position and has found itself compelled to respond by developing its own defence capabilities. Those actions are exclusively reactive in nature and are aimed at strengthening our own security and defence capacities. Belarus's cooperation with the Russian Federation, its main military and political ally, on strengthening its defence capabilities and national security is strictly in line with international law. The training that Russia has provided for Belarusian pilots capable of operating aircraft carrying specific munitions, the appropriate modernization of such aircraft and the possible — I emphasize "possible" — deployment of tactical nuclear weapons on Belarusian territory also constitute an exceptional and necessary response to the challenges and risks confronting Belarus. The measures are being implemented in strict compliance with the provisions of the NPT. Control over the nuclear weapons, as well as the relevant technology, remains with Russians. Under the NPT, nuclear-weapon States cannot transfer nuclear weapons or control of such weapons to any recipient whatsoever, and non-nuclear-weapon States cannot receive nuclear weapons or control them.

Today, just a few hours ago, Aleksandr Lukashenko, President of the Republic of Belarus, delivered an address to the Belarusian people and the National Assembly, Belarus's parliament, in which he responded openly and in detail to all questions related to the plans to strengthen Belarus' security and defence capacity, among other things. In his statement, President Lukashenko underscored that this is not a matter of blackmail nor intimidation. Belarus is not going to attack first, but it will respond appropriately, using all existing capacities at its disposal, to any external aggression. Incidentally, such cooperation between Belarus and Russia is nothing new when it comes to military cooperation between a non-nuclear and a nuclear Power within the framework of the NPT, and much has also been said about that today in this Chamber.

As we are all aware, NATO has a long-standing practice of carrying out so-called nuclear-sharing missions. Members know quite well that a number of aircraft belonging to NATO member countries have been certified to fly with nuclear weapons, while flight crews are being trained to carry out such missions and joint exercises are being conducted. Moreover, a number of European NATO members — including Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands, Italy and Türkiye — are hosting on their territories more than 150 tactical nuclear weapons from the United States, as well as more than 250 aircraft prepared for their possible use.

Belarus is a staunch proponent of constructive and respectful dialogue aimed at strengthening regional and global security, as well as multilateral mechanisms for disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control, including in the nuclear arena. President Lukashenko has repeatedly and openly called for the convening of such a broad multilateral dialogue in the spirit of San Francisco. We are grateful to Ukraine for bringing this issue up at today's Security Council meeting. We believe that the Security Council and the entire international community must finally pay close attention to the genuine threats posed by NATO's joint nuclear missions and the long-term deployment of nuclear weapons by the United States outside its national jurisdiction. We call on Ukraine not to stop halfway and to resolutely and courageously demand that NATO stop the practice of joint nuclear missions and that the United States withdraw its nuclear weapons from Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands, Italy and Türkiye, which, to use the terminology of Ukraine and some countries

represented here, should clearly be considered occupied States or countries being held hostage. Incidentally, Ukraine could ask the next President of the Security Council to convene a meeting to consider this issue comprehensively and perhaps adopt a decision.

We would also like to appeal to all to all those eager to address the human rights problems that supposedly exist in Belarus. We suggest that States first deal with their own problems in their own countries. For example, they should address the problems of the current and future pensioners and the problems of the current, past and, maybe, future Presidents. We have repeatedly said, and we reiterate, that they should not interfere in our internal affairs. They should deal with matters in their own countries and genuine human rights issues with regard to a decent life, health and security. They should not even try to speculate about the desires of the Belarusian people in taking the most important internal political decisions in their country. They do not have the slightest idea what the Belarusian people really think.

Let me now turn to the circulation by Albania of a document within the Security Council, which was also mentioned today. If it wants to turn the Security Council archives into a dustbin, it is on the right track. Albania is submitting documents of private figures, who represent no one but themselves and who are funded entirely by Western sponsors. Perhaps it is time for the taxpayers of those countries to ask their Governments how much money is being spent on the so-called Belarusian opposition, who exactly is paying from what sources and why. Apparently, they must be rich enough that they can spend such sums on fugitive citizens of Belarus, rather than on addressing the problems of their own countries.

By the way, this is another glaring example. If I may, there was something else about which we were just thinking. We can give Albania, for example, a verbatim of a conversation between some old ladies in front of their home discussing issues of international security. I can assure members that that document would have no less — perhaps more — value than the one that it has submitted.

I would like to reiterate that, incidentally, that is a brilliant example of the behaviour of Security Council Member States that are fully dependent on others for their opinions. It is another reminder to all States Members of the United Nations about how carefully they should approach their decisions when voting in elections for the non-permanent members of

the Security Council. In that regard, I would like to recall the fact that Security Council elections will take place in June of this year, together with the artificially created politicized competition in the Group of Eastern European States.

**The President:** I now give the floor to Mr. Skoog.

**Mr. Skoog:** I address the Security Council on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its member States. In addition, the candidate countries North Macedonia, Montenegro, Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as the potential candidate country Georgia, and Liechtenstein, Andorra, Monaco and San Marino align themselves with this statement.

The EU condemns the announcement by Russia on 25 March of its intention to deploy nuclear weapons on the territory of Belarus and the fact that an agreement was reached with Belarus to that end. That announcement, which is part of the continued reckless nuclear rhetoric by Russia, constitutes yet another irresponsible step, escalating an already tense situation, in view of Russia's illegal and unjustified war of aggression against Ukraine. Just a month ago, the General Assembly adopted resolution ES-11/6, on a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in Ukraine, calling on all Member States to cooperate in the spirit of solidarity to address the global impacts of the war, including with regard to nuclear security and safety.

The Belarusian regime is an accomplice in Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. The deletion of Belarus's declared stance as a non-nuclear territory from the revised Constitution, adopted last year, was a worrisome development. Last week's announcement that Russia intends to deploy nuclear weapons on Belarusian territory is yet another dangerous step. Threats, and the use of, nuclear weapons are inadmissible. Russia's decision will not weaken our resolve to support Ukraine.

However, Belarus can still make the choice to decline to host Russian nuclear weapons. We therefore call on the Belarus authorities to put an immediate stop to their support of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and reverse any decision that would only contribute to heightening tensions in the region.

As was recalled at today's meeting, on 5 December 1994, the three depositories of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), including Russia, signed the Budapest Memorandum with

Ukraine, Belarus and Kazakhstan upon their respective accession to the NPT. Besides the reaffirmation of the commitments by the depositories, including Russia, to "respect the independence and sovereignty and the existing borders" of Ukraine, Belarus and Kazakhstan and to refrain from the threat or use of force against their territorial integrity or political independence, the Memorandum also takes into account the commitments by the three States joining the NPT, including notably Belarus, "to eliminate all nuclear weapons from [their] territory".

Let me recall that a little more than a year ago, on 3 January 2022, Russia signed up to the joint statement by the nuclear-weapon States signatories to the NPT, reaffirming that a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought. Furthermore, it reiterated that commitment just three days before its 25 March announcement in the 22 March joint statement with China.

Through its unacceptable and dangerous nuclear rhetoric and by regularly alluding to the use of nuclear weapons in a war of aggression that it itself started, and coupled with the 25 March announcement on deploying nuclear weapons on the territory of Belarus, Russia is acting in stark contradiction to the commitments of which it has undertaken to be a guardian. That announced step also runs counter to the commitment of Belarus taken into account in the Budapest Memorandum to eliminate all nuclear weapons from its territory.

The EU therefore calls on Russia and Belarus to reverse that decision and to abide by all their above-mentioned commitments. The EU also calls on Russia to resume the implementation of the New START Treaty. The EU and its member States will continue to monitor the situation closely, in coordination with all our partners.

It being your last day as President of the Security Council, Sir, I want to congratulate you and Mozambique on a very successful presidency.

**The President:** I thank Mr. Skoog for the kind words addressed to Mozambique and our presidency.

I now give the floor to the representative of Poland.

**Mr. Szczerski (Poland):** Let me start by thanking you, Mr. President, for providing Poland with an opportunity to address the Security Council today on a topic of enormous importance for our country,

the region of Central Europe, and, in fact, the whole world. Before I deliver my remarks, however, I wish first to congratulate you, Sir, on the successful conduct of Mozambique's presidency of the Council during the month of March. I also thank High Representative Nakamitsu for her briefing.

Poland anchors its foreign policy on the need for assuring peace and security in our region. We want the region to be secure and stable, where all nations are able to freely make their choices with regard to both their domestic and foreign policies. We want the region to be free of domination, suppression and external threats. Poland therefore notes with serious concern Russia's announced plans to deploy tactical nuclear weapons and their means of delivery to Belarus. Such a decision would constitute an irresponsible escalation and only further increase the ongoing tensions in Europe stemming from Russia's aggression against Ukraine. It would also pose a major risk to the integrity of the global non-proliferation system.

The international community needs to categorically condemn Russia's nuclear rhetoric, which is extremely dangerous and highly irresponsible. Moscow's strategy, echoed today by Aleksandr Lukashenko, is clear: to intimidate, to provoke and to impede efforts aimed at ending Russia's war on Ukraine. It is the rhetoric of confrontation. It undermines efforts to find any successful peace formula, moving away from proposals, including those made by members of the Security Council.

In this context, we also want to attract Council members' attention to Russia's continued efforts to fully subordinate Belarus, both politically and militarily, and to further instrumentalize Minsk in pursuing Moscow's aggressive policy. Poland has raised the issue of Belarus' culpability on several occasions in this Chamber. It is deplorable that the authorities in Minsk chose to act as an enabler to Russia's illegal war in Ukraine in the first place. It is unacceptable that it has now decided to further pursue this role, to the detriment of the security of us all.

Russia has consistently broken its arms control commitments. One of the most recent acts was the suspension of its participation in the New START Treaty. But we must not forget that the collapse of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty in 1991 also occurred due to Russia's decisions. The international community would desperately wish to see Russia return to compliance and to acting in good faith. But, instead,

we are served with the announcement of yet another escalatory measure.

Repeated threats of use of nuclear weapons are utterly irresponsible and unacceptable, even if they boil down to a political bluff or blackmail. It was barely more than a year ago, in January 2022, that Moscow joined the other permanent members of the Security Council in adopting a statement saying that a nuclear war can never be won and should never be fought. This fact has been recalled by many delegations today. However, the sad reality we find ourselves in at present is at best the manifestation of Russia's contempt for its own commitments to global peace and to the principles that should bind us all as States Members of the United Nations.

To conclude, Poland calls on Russia and Belarus to refrain from pursuing the announced plans and comply with their international commitments. We also appeal to all States to redouble their efforts aimed at strengthening the non-proliferation system, despite Russia's irresponsible policy and aggressive behaviour. Those actions must not work. The risk of a nuclear apocalypse in the region and the world must be averted.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Estonia.

**Mr. Tammsaar (Estonia):** I am speaking on behalf of the Baltic States — Latvia, Lithuania and my own country, Estonia. I thank High Representative Izumi Nakamitsu for her briefing, and the presidency for this opportunity to address the Security Council.

Little more than a year ago, Russia signed the joint Permanent Five statement reaffirming that a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought. Last week, Russia reaffirmed this position in its joint statement with China and further committed to reducing the risk of nuclear war and easing tensions. Just a couple of days later, the masks were off again: Russia resorted again to dangerous and irresponsible nuclear rhetoric by revealing its alleged plan to deploy nuclear weapons to Belarus.

This latest statement signals the desperation Moscow is facing on the battlefield as it pursues its unprovoked and unjustified aggression against Ukraine. Under the threat of nuclear escalation, the Kremlin is hoping to deter Ukraine from exercising its inherent right to self-defence. It hopes to intimidate countries from helping Ukraine.

Our response to Russia's actions is clear and simple: nuclear blackmail does not work. We will not be intimidated nor deterred. We will continue to support Ukraine as long as it takes — until Russia has withdrawn all of its forces from the territory of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders.

Russia's statement proves once again how unreliable, untrustworthy and worthless its commitments are to its partners and to the international community. In 1994, Ukraine gave up its nuclear arsenal in return to assurances given, inter alia, by Russia, that its independence and sovereignty of Ukraine would be respected and that Russia would refrain from the threat or use of force against Ukraine's territorial integrity. Russia blatantly violated the Budapest Memorandum as well as the United Nations Charter by occupying Crimea in 2014.

Since then, we have watched how Russia has embarked on systematically undermining the international arms-control, disarmament and non-proliferation framework. It is time for the international community to recognize this destructive pattern of Russia and stand against it firmly.

The suspension of the New START Treaty is a recent example of Russia's reckless behaviour to undermine nuclear stability. We urge Russia to reverse this decision and abide by all of its commitments and to return to full compliance with the New START Treaty.

Belarus has been supporting Russia's aggression against Ukraine since the full-scale invasion started in February 2022. We note with regret that Belarus, under the regime of Lukashenko, is increasingly losing its sovereignty and is increasingly integrated into Russia's military plans.

We urge Belarus to stop acting as an enabler to Russia's illegal war in Ukraine. We urge the Lukashenko regime to stop being accomplice to Russia's desperate moves to threaten its neighbours and destabilize Europe. We also support the Belarusian democratic movement and civil society and urge them to continue to stand for a free, independent and democratic Belarus and prevent their country from becoming another victim of Russia's imperial ambitions.

Finally, is it not telling that tomorrow, on the anniversary of Bucha massacre, Russia will assume the

presidency of the Security Council? This is shameful, humiliating and dangerous to the credibility and effective functioning of this body. A country that fights a war of aggression against its neighbour, commits the most horrendous atrocities, threatens the world with nuclear weapons, and whose leader is a war criminal with a standing arrest warrant from the International Criminal Court should have no place in leading a body the primary purpose of which is to preserve international peace and security. It is up to the responsible members of this body to counter Russia's attempts to transform the primary venue of international diplomacy into a mockery and a platform for disinformation.

**The President:** There are no more names inscribed the list of speakers.

As this is the last scheduled meeting of the Council for the month of March, I would like to express the profound and sincere appreciation of the delegation of Mozambique to the members of the Council and the Council's secretariat for their support and cooperation in our task of presiding over this important body, which is not very easy. It has indeed been a busy month, and one in which we rallied to arrive at consensus on several important issues within our purview.

The presence of the President of the Republic of Mozambique in the Chamber for two days bears testimony to the high importance we attach to this body established by the Charter of the United Nations. We understand that we made some progress in our common determination to bring about peace and security in the world.

I must say that we could not have done it alone and without the hard work, support and positive contributions of every delegation and the representatives of the Secretariat, including the technical support team and the conference service officers, interpreters, verbatim reporters and security staff. As we end our presidency, I know I speak on behalf of the Council in wishing the delegation of the Russian Federation — I see our colleague Ambassador Nebenzia left — good luck in the month of April. We all know that, even though they are permanent members of the Security Council, this seat is always very difficult.

*The meeting rose at 12.15 p.m.*