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Seventy-ninth year

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Provisional

<i>President:</i>	Ms. Kamikawa/Mrs. Shino	(Japan)
<i>Members:</i>	Algeria	Mr. Bendjama
	China	Mr. Zhang Jun
	Ecuador	Mr. De La Gasca
	France	Mr. De Rivière
	Guyana	Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett
	Malta	Mrs. Frazier
	Mozambique	Ms. Dlhovo
	Republic of Korea	Mr. Hwang
	Russian Federation	Mr. Polyanskiy
	Sierra Leone	Ms. Alghali
	Slovenia	Mr. Žbogar
	Switzerland	Mrs. Baeriswyl
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Mr. Kariuki
	United States of America	Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield

Agenda

Maintenance of international peace and security
Nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation

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

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Maintenance of international peace and security

Nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation

The President: I would like to warmly welcome the Secretary-General, as well as the ministers and other high-level representatives present in the Chamber. Their presence today underscore the importance of the importance of the subject matter under discussion.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Robert Floyd, Executive Secretary of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization; and Ms. Gaukhar Mukhatzhanova, Director of the International Organizations and Non-Proliferation Programme, Vienna Center for Disarmament and Non-Proliferation.

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

I warmly welcome His Excellency Secretary-General António Guterres, to whom I now give the floor.

The Secretary-General: I thank the Government of Japan for convening the Council around the vital issue of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

Japan knows better than any country on Earth the brutal cost of nuclear carnage. But almost eight decades after the incineration of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, nuclear weapons still represent a clear and present danger to global peace and security.

When I launched the Agenda for Disarmament in 2018, I warned that:

“when each country pursues its own security without regard for others, we create global insecurity that threatens us all”.

Today we meet at a time when geopolitical tensions and mistrust have escalated the risk of nuclear warfare to its highest point in decades. The Doomsday Clock is ticking loudly enough for all to hear — from academics and civil society groups, calling for an end to the nuclear madness; to Pope Francis, who calls the possession of nuclear arms immoral; to young people across the globe worried for their future and demanding change;

to the hibakusha, the brave survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, among our greatest living examples of speaking truth to power, delivering their timeless message of peace; to Hollywood, where Oppenheimer brought the harsh reality of nuclear doomsday to vivid life for millions around the world.

Humankind cannot survive a sequel to Oppenheimer. Voice after voice, alarm after alarm, survivor after survivor, are calling the world back from the brink. And what is the response? States possessing nuclear weapons are absent from the table of dialogue. Investments in the tools of war are outstripping investments in the tools of peace. Arms budgets are growing, while diplomacy and development budgets are shrinking. Emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence and domains in cyberspace and outer space, have exposed new vulnerabilities and created new risks. Countries are pouring resources into deadly new nuclear technologies and spreading the threat to new domains. And some statements have raised the prospect of unleashing nuclear hell — threats that we must all denounce with clarity and force.

Nuclear weapons are the most destructive weapons ever invented, capable of eliminating all life on earth. Today those weapons are growing in power, range and stealth. An accidental launch is one mistake, one miscalculation or one rash act away. And ultimately, all of humankind will pay the price. A nuclear war must never be waged, because a nuclear war can never be won.

There is one path and one path only that will vanquish this senseless and suicidal shadow once and for all: we need disarmament now. In fact, eliminating nuclear weapons is the first action called for under the proposed New Agenda for Peace, our effort to strengthen the tools of prevention and disarmament. We need nuclear-weapon States to lead the way across six areas.

First, we need dialogue. Nuclear-weapon States must re-engage in working together to develop transparency and confidence-building measures in order to prevent any use of a nuclear weapon. That should include measures that address the nexus between nuclear weapons and new technologies and domains.

Secondly, nuclear sabre-rattling must stop. Threats to use nuclear weapons in any capacity are unacceptable.

Thirdly, nuclear-weapon States must reaffirm moratoriums on nuclear testing. That means pledging

to avoid taking any actions that would undermine the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, the entry into force of which must be a priority.

Fourthly, disarmament commitments must become action. Nuclear-weapon States parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons must reaffirm their commitment to that Treaty and to the commitments they have made as States parties, and they should pledge to hold each other accountable to those commitments.

Fifthly, we need a joint no-first-use agreement. Nuclear-weapon States must urgently agree that none of them will be the first to use nuclear weapons. As a matter of fact, none should use them in any circumstances.

And sixthly, we need reductions in the number of nuclear weapons. Those reductions must be led by the holders of the largest nuclear arsenals — namely, the United States and the Russian Federation — which must find a way back to the negotiating table to fully implement the Treaty between the United States of America and the Russian Federation on Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms and reach an agreement on that Treaty's successor.

(spoke in French)

The responsibility to act extends to non-nuclear-weapon States as well. I urge them to, beyond fulfilling their own non-proliferation obligations, contribute to efforts to ensure that nuclear disarmament is verifiable and irreversible. Help us to hold nuclear-weapon States to account. Help us to strengthen the global disarmament architecture, particularly the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, and support the work of the International Atomic Energy Agency and our efforts to breathe new life into the Conference on Disarmament.

In recent years, the Conference on Disarmament has become synonymous with diplomatic deadlock and outdated working methods — a shameful development. When I addressed the Conference last month, I called for a new intergovernmental process, under the General Assembly, to be put in place, with a view to reforming the disarmament machinery, including the Conference. We hope that that could finally lead to the convening of a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. September's Summit of the Future and the Pact that will emerge from it will give the international community a significant opportunity to

rally around concrete reforms of the global disarmament architecture and the bodies and institutions that uphold it.

The Council has an opportunity to set decisive milestones across all those areas — to look beyond today's divisions and state clearly that living with the existential threat of nuclear weapons is unacceptable, to agree that only by working together can the prospect of a nuclear holocaust be eliminated and to pave the way for a world free of these instruments of annihilation. It is time.

The President: I thank the Secretary-General for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Floyd.

Mr. Floyd: It is a pleasure to engage again with the Security Council in this Chamber, where the world's most challenging issues are deliberated.

On 27 September 2021, I addressed the Council under Ireland's presidency, on the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) (see S/PV.8865). I return today to brief the Council on the work of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO) since then, and I am acutely aware that today's uncertain geopolitical context is even more complex.

It is one thing to debate the policy issues raised by weapons of mass destruction, but it is quite another thing to go to Japan and to visit Hiroshima — to see for oneself one of the two places on Earth where a nuclear bomb was dropped in war. I was there in August 2023. But back on a calm summer's morning, on 6 August 1945, a little boy three years of age is riding his tricycle. A nuclear bomb explodes 600 metres above Hiroshima, causing the largest near-instantaneous obliteration of human life ever seen on Earth. Visiting the Peace Memorial Museum now, one sees photos of those affected and things found afterwards, things one cannot forget — that tiny, charred tricycle, found a kilometre from the centre of the blast.

Between 1945 and 1996, when the CTBT was opened for signature, more than 2,000 nuclear tests were conducted, most of them far bigger than the bomb that devastated Hiroshima. That bomb had a blast equivalent to 15,000 tons of TNT. But the largest bomb ever tested — imagine a cube of TNT, weighing 50 million tons and measuring 300 metres wide, 300 metres deep and 300 metres tall, approximately the height of the Chrysler Building — consisted of 50 million tons of TNT, all that power to destroy.

Before 1996, 2,000 tests had been conducted. Since 1996 and the opening for signature of the CTBT, there have been fewer than one dozen tests. What changed? The world decided that enough was enough. The CTBT was agreed in 1996 — a transformation for the better. But why such success? Above all, that success was because the Treaty is fair and transparent. The Treaty prescribes a global network of 337 monitoring facilities. They will detect any significant explosion anywhere on Earth almost immediately. They monitor seismic activity, sound waves in the oceans, sound waves in the atmosphere and radioactive particles in the air. Their data streams to the CTBTO in Vienna around the clock. That data is not secret. It is available to all CTBT States signatories, including all of the current Security Council members. And the network is growing. Since my last briefing to the Council, we have certified four more stations. That brings the total number of facilities to 306. Two major national networks have been completed. Both Argentina and the Russian Federation have now established all required facilities within their territory, including stations in some of the world's most extreme environments. We are closing in on our target. But that is not all. Since I last briefed the Council, the CTBTO's National Data Centres for All initiative was established, and we have had an excellent response. We are working with more and more States to help them to set up their own national data centres, so that they can access all of the CTBTO data.

It is obvious: this fair, transparent Treaty is a success that everyone can understand. That is why support for the Treaty grows and grows. In 2021, I told the Council that 185 States had signed the Treaty. Now 187 States have signed the Treaty. In 2021 I told the Council that 170 States had ratified the Treaty. As of today, 178 have ratified it. Yes, there was one high-profile de-ratification last year — one step backwards, but nine steps forward. The trend is clear, strong. In fact, last Wednesday, one more country ratified the CTBT, proudly declaring its commitment to a world free of nuclear tests. That new ratification, by Papua New Guinea, is worth celebrating. I thank the Government of Papua New Guinea for their valuable contribution to international peace and security. It sustains momentum towards universalization.

Something else has changed since 2021. There is a sense of unease and uncertainty prompted by new wars and conflicts. Nuclear weapons are back in the public consciousness, not only thanks to the Oscar-

winning film *Oppenheimer*. There are concerns that one State is accumulating worrisome amounts of highly enriched uranium, reports of increased activity at former nuclear test sites in a number of States and suggestions that some States might even be considering the use of nuclear weapons.

In uncertain times, the best response is much more certainty. Our verification system detects any nuclear explosion anywhere on Earth, any time. However, the Treaty envisages more verification tools to further boost transparency and provide that certainty, to build trust and dispel any suspicion or allegation about a State testing in secret so that the world's decision-makers, like the members of the Council, have the facts.

The Treaty outlines four verification tools: first, the International Monitoring System, which is now 90 per cent complete; secondly, consultation and clarification; thirdly, confidence-building measures; and fourthly and importantly, on-site inspection. That last one, on-site inspection, is the Treaty's crucial practical tool to complement the International Monitoring System. It confirms beyond any doubt that an explosion is, or is not, a nuclear explosion, providing certainty through transparency. But until the Treaty enters into force, we cannot get that certainty through transparency.

Much has changed since I was last here in 2021, but one thing has not changed: the case for the CTBT's entry into force. What if we here today agreed that the world needs more certainty and trust so that we would never again see a nuclear weapon's indiscriminate destruction? What if we all called for the CTBT to enter into force? What if there were the shared political leadership to push it over the line? That would be a world with much more security, maybe even more peace.

The President: I thank Mr. Floyd for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Mukhatzhanova.

Ms. Mukhatzhanova: It is a great honour indeed to address the Security Council today on one of the most important and gravest issues facing humankind. I thank the Government of Japan and Minister for Foreign Affairs Kamikawa for the invitation and for including a civil society representative in this meeting.

It is a rare occurrence to have a speaker from a non-governmental organization in a meeting such as this, as forums relating to nuclear weapons are traditionally inhospitable to formal non-governmental interventions. However, there is a growing recognition that the

inclusion of diverse stakeholders and perspectives in these discussions provides for a deeper, more holistic understanding of the problem of nuclear weapons and improves our collective ability to develop better solutions. Improving gender diversity, in particular, is also in line with the Member States' commitments under the women and peace and security resolutions. Beyond the improved numbers regarding women's participation, the application of the gender lens and feminist perspectives can help to break the traditional conceptions of power and security associated with nuclear weapons and promote a more human-centred approach. I urge all Member States to actively facilitate inclusivity in multilateral forums, including the review process of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).

Council members receive briefings on many difficult, gruesome and heartbreaking issues. They hear about wars and human rights violations, terrorist acts and genocide, arms trafficking and proliferation threats. But the briefing that the Council has not received, and must never receive, is one on the effects and consequences of a new use of nuclear weapons — a briefing that could tell of tens of thousands or more killed in the blasts; hundreds of thousands suffering and dying from radiation sickness, burns and other injuries; millions displaced and many, many more put at risk of starvation by the medium- and long-term effects on climate, agricultural production and food markets around the world.

That scenario seems unthinkable, and yet today the risk of nuclear weapon use is higher than it has been in decades, as the norm against such use — the nuclear taboo — is undermined by reckless rhetoric and threats, especially those issued in the context of an active military conflict. The NPT, the foundational instrument of the non-proliferation and disarmament regime, is under tremendous pressure. Nuclear- and non-nuclear-weapon States are divided over the lack of implementation of nuclear disarmament commitments, while the modernization and, in some cases, the numerical growth of arsenals send a message of long-term reliance on nuclear weapons. The majority of Member States have rejected nuclear weapons by joining the NPT and nuclear-weapon-free zones and, more recently, by concluding the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. But we are now witnessing a recommitment to nuclear weapons, an increase in the value attached to them that challenges the norm against their pursuit and acquisition and contributes to proliferation pressures.

Furthermore, the divisions among the nuclear-weapon States are such that the actors whose cooperation is key to achieving outcomes and advancing the goals of the NPT are effectively not talking to each other. Throughout the cold war, the opposing super-Powers were able to agree on the importance of non-proliferation and engagement on arms control, and worked together to secure the NPT. That is not the case today, and that is a fundamental challenge to the ability of States parties to agree on a meaningful consensus outcome at the next Review Conference of the Parties to the NPT, to be held in 2026.

The nuclear-weapon States often cite the difficult international security environment as a reason not to proceed with nuclear disarmament. The conditions are not right, they say. Fair enough, the situation is indeed dire. However, the five countries defined as nuclear-weapon States under the NPT are also the five permanent members of the Security Council, to whom the Charter of the United Nations entrusts the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. It is that responsibility I want to emphasize and appeal to today, for it is in members' hands, more than anyone else's, to make sure that the nuclear taboo holds and that the Council and its future iterations never have to receive the kind of briefing I described earlier.

Nuclear risk has been on the mind of countless experts, policymakers and diplomats in recent years. There has been no shortage of proposals on steps and measures to implement. However, nuclear risk reduction discussions at the NPT review process meetings get bogged down in framing debates — is it a substitute for nuclear disarmament or its enabler, are we talking about strategic risks or any risks emanating from nuclear weapons? Important though those questions are, the 2026 Review Conference cannot spend days going over the same arguments. It would not be productive, and we can only hope it will not be too late.

The Security Council, specifically its five permanent members, should step up now. Recall how encouraging the Council's action was in 1995, in the run-up to the indefinite extension of the NPT. Then, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 984 (1995), on assurances against the use of nuclear weapons.

Ahead of the eleventh Review Conference, the nuclear-weapon States should issue pledges, individually or collectively, on reducing the nuclear

risks and formalize them through a Security Council resolution similar to resolution 984 (1995). Most important, the new resolution should clearly state that nuclear weapons must never be used again under any circumstances. I further urge the nuclear-weapon States to include the following commitments: no increase in nuclear arsenals, no new weapon designs, no new deployments of weapons — at home or abroad, on Earth or in outer space — no nuclear testing and no threats to use nuclear weapons.

I recognize that would be a tall order even in better times, not to mention today's circumstances. But precisely because of how high the stakes are, I call on the Council to approach it not from the place of balancing and bargaining, but from recognition of its responsibility as nuclear-weapon States and permanent members of the Security Council.

Accepting an Oscar for his portrayal of Robert Oppenheimer, Cillian Murphy said that we are all living in Oppenheimer's world now and dedicated his award to the peacemakers everywhere. Therefore, if I may, to the Security Council members, and particularly the five permanent members, I would like to say: in the world of heightened nuclear threat, be the peacemakers.

The President: I thank Ms. Mukhatzhanova for her briefing.

I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan.

I thank everyone all for joining me today. I also thank Secretary-General António Guterres, Mr. Robert Floyd and Ms. Gaukhar Mukhatzhanova for their insights.

The catastrophes of Hiroshima and Nagasaki must never be repeated. Based on that firm belief, as the only country ever to have suffered atomic bombings during war, Japan has been a global leader in the quest to realize a world without nuclear weapons. As part of that endeavour, since 1994 Japan has submitted annual General Assembly resolutions on nuclear disarmament, which have been widely supported by the United Nations membership.

At the latest Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), Prime Minister Kishida proposed the Hiroshima Action Plan. Moreover, Japan hosted the Group of Seven Summit in Hiroshima last year. On that occasion, not only the Group of Seven leaders but also the Ukrainian President and representatives of the

Association of Southeast Nations, the African Union, the Pacific Islands Forum and the Group of Twenty deepened their understanding of the realities of the atomic bombing. Their visit to Hiroshima sent a strong message in support of a world without nuclear weapons.

The international security environment is becoming more severe. The international community has become even more divided over how to advance nuclear disarmament. Nevertheless, we must steadily advance realistic and practical efforts towards a world without nuclear weapons.

The NPT is the cornerstone of the international nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime. Next year, the International Group of Eminent Persons, established under Prime Minister Kishida's initiative, will issue recommendations for the NPT Review Conference in 2026. That is why it is extremely relevant and meaningful to hold this meeting today at the Security Council in the midterm year of the NPT review cycle, with the participation of both nuclear-weapon States and non-nuclear weapon States.

I would like to stress the following four perspectives.

The first is the high importance of the five actions set forth in the Hiroshima Action Plan. They include, first a shared recognition of the importance of continuing the record on the non-use of nuclear weapons; secondly, enhancing transparency; thirdly, maintaining the decreasing trend in the global nuclear stockpile; fourthly securing nuclear non-proliferation and promoting the peaceful uses of nuclear energy; and fifthly, encouraging visits to Hiroshima and Nagasaki by international leaders and others. We must implement those actions with an ever-greater sense of urgency.

Secondly, Japan will further strengthen and lead the efforts to embody the five actions of the Hiroshima Action Plan. As a new step to that end, I am delighted to announce the establishment of the Friends of the Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty, a cross-regional group of friends that aims to maintain and enhance political attention towards a fissile material cut-off treaty. The importance of a fissile material cut-off treaty in limiting the quantitative improvement of nuclear weapons by banning the production of fissile materials is indisputable. Japan will further increase international and political attention towards a fissile material cut-off treaty.

Empowering young people is key for our future. We will create a global network among youth towards the elimination of nuclear weapons. In that context, Japan welcomes the start of the United Nations Youth Leader Fund for a world without nuclear weapons, in which future leaders visiting Hiroshima and Nagasaki will learn first-hand about the realities of atomic bombings.

In addition, we need to overcome the dichotomy between deterrence and/or disarmament. Through the Japan Chair for a world without nuclear weapons, Japan aims to deepen international discussion in this area.

Japan promotes further cooperation with international organizations. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) plays an extremely important role in promoting international nuclear non-proliferation and peaceful uses of nuclear energy. Last week, the Director General of the IAEA, Mr. Grossi, visited Japan. Japan reaffirmed its commitment to cooperate with the Agency in promoting the peaceful use of nuclear energy, which contributes to the Sustainable Development Goals. Japan fully supports the first IAEA Nuclear Energy Summit, to be held this week.

Thirdly, the international community must unite, with one voice, against any movement that runs counter to a world without nuclear weapons. A rapid build-up of nuclear capabilities by certain countries could spark a nuclear arms race.

In the context of the situation in Ukraine, Russia's nuclear threats, let alone the use of nuclear weapons, are absolutely unacceptable. Japan urges Russia to return to the full implementation of the New START Treaty. In addition, Japan expresses its strong hope for dialogue that leads to the development of a broader arms control framework that covers a wider range of weapons systems with appropriate governance.

North Korea has advanced its nuclear and missile activities. It launched a ballistic missile yesterday, in violation of multiple Security Council resolutions. Such activities by North Korea threaten the peace and stability of the region and the international community. They are totally unacceptable. Moreover, there is a possibility of further provocations, including a nuclear test. In that context, the role of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1718 (2006) and its Panel of Experts is critically important, and its function needs to be maintained.

With no clear outlook in resolving Iran's nuclear issue, restraint by the countries concerned, including Iran, is necessary, particularly in the light of the current heightened tensions in the Middle East.

Furthermore, Japan promotes the implementation of resolution 1540 (2004), with the aim of preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction to non-State actors.

During the Cold War, despite the confrontational environment at that time, the international community established legal frameworks to ensure the peaceful and sustainable use of outer space, thus prohibiting the placement of nuclear weapons or any other kinds of weapons of mass destruction in outer space. Even now, Japan firmly believes that outer space must remain a domain free of nuclear weapons and that it is our common responsibility to fully comply with the existing legal frameworks, including the Outer Space Treaty.

Fourthly, Japan is closely following the possible impact of emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence, on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. In that context, Japan welcomes the commitment to maintain human control and involvement made by the United States, United Kingdom and France during the most recent NPT Review Conference. Japan strongly calls for other nuclear-weapon States to make the same commitment.

I also stress the importance of the women and peace and security perspective. We will continue to emphasize the importance of taking into account gender perspectives during decision-making processes, as Japan has called for in its annual General Assembly resolutions on nuclear disarmament.

I look forward to a vibrant discussion to share ideas and proposals to accelerate concrete actions to be advanced at the next NPT Review Conference.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Mozambique.

Ms. Dlhovo (Mozambique): I thank you, Madam President, for giving me the floor.

(spoke in Portuguese; English text provided)

by the delegation)

We are pleased to begin our intervention by commending Japan for the initiative of convening this important event that aims to debate a subject that is currently front and centre in issues related to global peace, security and stability.

Allow me to convey to the Council the warm greetings of His Excellency Mr. Filipe Jacinto Nyusi, President of the Republic of Mozambique.

We express our deep gratitude to the President of the Council and my sister, Her Excellency Ms. Yoko Kamikawa, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan, for the invitation extended to Mozambique to participate in this ministerial event.

We express our sincere recognition to His Excellency Mr. António Guterres, Secretary-General, for the vision, leadership and courage with which he has led our Organization, particularly with regard to the international peace and security agenda.

For Mozambique, the scheduling of this topic represents an excellent opportunity for the Security Council to reflect in depth on the commitments made by the Member States of the United Nations within the framework of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and other international instruments in the field of the global disarmament agenda.

We are aware that we are going through a challenging international situation due to complex situations, with a direct impact on the architecture of international peace and security. Indeed, in various parts of the world, political and military instability, armed conflicts, poverty and the effects of climate change, which continue to have a significant and negative impact, challenge efforts to promote peace and development.

The situation is compounded by the fragmentation and recomposition of non-State groups with access to new information and communication technologies, which they use for terrorist purposes. Mozambique is therefore particularly concerned about the dangerous tendency to create and disseminate narratives and other acts that generate mistrust, which could lead to setbacks in our agenda of disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons.

It is our understanding that the elements of a concrete and practical agenda to reduce the risk of nuclear conflict and arms races and strengthen the Treaty

on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons include the recognition, by all Member States, that the nuclear status quo that generates instability, distrust, uncertainty and competition derives from the inconsistency between discourse and practice — we speak of one thing, but do another.

In that context, Mozambique is committed to the effective implementation of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty, also known as the Treaty of Pelindaba. Those instruments represent a strong show of support for multilateral approaches to nuclear disarmament and are essential to promoting global security, reducing the proliferation of nuclear weapons and maintaining a safer and more peaceful world. That global commitment is crucial for international peace and security. The international community must continue to work together to achieve a world that is safer and free from nuclear weapons.

Mozambique is of the view that the adoption of an assertive and consistent approach between the declared intentions and concrete actions of each of our countries must be based on the certainty that a war using nuclear weapons would have catastrophic consequences for all humankind. We must recognize that, if that happens, it would be extremely unfair to all the countries and peoples around the world that love peace and deplore nuclear weapons. It would be particularly unfair to Africa, taking into account that none of the 54 African countries possesses nuclear weapons.

As a country that believes in and values international institutions, Mozambique is in favour of a world that does not gravitate around the doctrine of nuclear deterrence. We are in favour of a world that gives primacy and priority to the development of nuclear technology for peaceful purposes. We therefore want to avail ourselves of this Security Council meeting to recommend that the eleventh Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, scheduled for 2026, should consider adopting that approach in its agenda items, in view of the political responsibility of current leaders to build a world free of nuclear weapons for future generations. Our children and future generations deserve to live in a world of peace, harmony and concord.

In that context, we would like to address three aspects that we consider important as our contribution.

First, a balanced approach to the use of nuclear technology, including artificial intelligence, should be adopted, one that can translate into the implementation of relevant international legislation and consultations between States.

Secondly, there is a need to prioritize investments in nuclear programmes for peaceful purposes, with an emphasis on the areas of energy transition and human medicine. In particular, we suggest the creation of a global compact in the form of an incubator through which nuclear knowledge and relevant technology relevant to the progress of humankind is shared, in line with the Sustainable Development Goals.

Thirdly, we recognize and appreciate the United Nations Disarmament Commission, the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1540 (2004) and the International Atomic Energy Agency for their efforts to achieve nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. May they exercise their mandates with impartiality. Support for training and technical assistance can contribute to the institutional capacity-building for countries that are most vulnerable to conflicts.

Mozambique reiterates its commitment to continuing to collaborate with international organizations to promote nuclear disarmament, with the peaceful use of nuclear energy for sustainable peace to the benefit of economic and social development.

With March being a month dedicated to women, we would like to remind Council members that, in March 2023, during Mozambique's presidency of the Council, we effusively praised the role of women in building and consolidating peace, including in conflict prevention and resolution. We believe that the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation agenda can also be effective if we continue to count on the active involvement of women, including assuming a leadership role in that matter. Greater and better inclusion of women in tackling today's pressing challenges and issues, such as disarmament and the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, can contribute to the building and maintenance of peace and international development. It is essential to recognize and value the role of women in the quest for a safer and more peaceful world.

In conclusion, I would like to express our firm conviction that, together and with each one of us doing their part, we can create a world in which humankind can live in peace, security and harmony.

The President: I now call on the Permanent Representative of the United States and member of President Biden's Cabinet.

Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield (United States of America): Let me start by welcoming you, Madam President, here to the Council today, and let me thank Japan for convening this important meeting. I thank the Secretary-General for his statement, and I would like to thank the two briefers for their briefings and recommendations.

Around 60 years ago, President John F. Kennedy visited American University in Washington, D.C. He was on campus to deliver a commencement address, entitled "A Strategy of Peace". In it, he outlined not only a plan to curb nuclear arms, but a hopeful path to world peace, despite escalating nuclear armament. Ultimately, he explained,

"Our most common basic link is that we all inhabit this small planet. We all breathe the same air. We all cherish our children's future. And we are all mortal."

Today, six decades after Kennedy's landmark address, and five and a half decades since the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) entered into force, those links remain — as does the United States commitment to strengthening and upholding the nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament regime, with the NPT at its centre.

And yet the global framework that has curbed nuclear armament for years is under increasing strain. Iran has continued expanding segments of its nuclear programme without any credible civilian justification, and for more than five years, has failed to cooperate with the International Atomic Energy Agency. Since launching its full-scale invasion of Ukraine, Russia has irresponsibly invoked dangerous nuclear rhetoric and walked away from several of its arms control obligations. All the while, China has rapidly and opaquely built up and diversified its nuclear weapons stores, and Russia and China have remained unwilling to engage in substantive discussions around arms control or risk reduction. What is more, both countries have defended and even enabled dangerous proliferators.

That brings me to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, which continues its unlawful development of weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missiles, in violation of multiple Security Council resolutions.

Just this weekend — as Council members have in fact heard — we saw multiple Democratic People’s Republic of Korea ballistic missile launches testing delivery systems for nuclear weapons.

We urge everyone in the Council to support the Panel of Experts of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1718 (2006) by extending its mandate later this week. Silencing independent and objective experts will not change the reality of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea’s efforts. It will only make it more difficult for us to address that threat.

It is not just those individual actors putting a strain on the global non-proliferation regime. Today our existing regime faces new and evolving challenges, such as artificial intelligence, which can be hacked or malfunction, be misinterpreted or provide misinformation. My hope is that today we can take stock of the challenges posed by those new technologies, and more importantly, commit to addressing them. In order to do that, it is critical that every member of the Council reaffirm their commitment to an objective that I believe we all want to see: a world without nuclear weapons and with undiminished security for all.

How do we get there? At a basic level, we must comply with existing nuclear arms control obligations and engage constructively on potential new ones. The United States is willing to engage in bilateral arms control discussions with Russia and China right now, without preconditions. All they have to do is say yes and come to the table in good faith. States with nuclear weapons must also maintain a moratorium on explosive nuclear testing and support the monitoring capabilities outlined by Mr. Floyd today. In addition, to forestall a potential arms race, we need to see an end to the production of fissile material for use in nuclear weapons and continue pursuing negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT).

Today we announce that we are officially among Japan’s Friends of the FMCT coalition, a group dedicated to seeing that treaty adopted.

There is more we must do to achieve a world without nuclear weapons. Nuclear-weapon States must provide transparency into their programmes and engage with one another to reduce the risk of nuclear conflict. The United States has modelled that transparency and cooperation and will continue to press for both. We must empower all those with the potential

to leverage technology for good and minimize its harmful effects, including women, who are frequently left out of the conversation around non-proliferation. We must hold would-be proliferators to account and fully implement relevant Security Council resolutions, including by supporting subsidiary bodies such as the 1718 Committee and the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1540 (2004), the latter of which celebrates its twentieth anniversary this year. We must identify and implement measures around new technologies, such as those outlined in the United States-proposed political declaration on the responsible military use of artificial intelligence and autonomy, which already has over 50 cosponsors.

And then there is the issue of outer space and the Outer Space Treaty governing it. Let me be clear: any placement of nuclear weapons into orbit around the Earth would be unprecedented, dangerous and unacceptable. States parties must commit to upholding their obligations under article IV of the Outer Space Treaty. And we must urge all Member States who are not yet party to it to accede to it without delay.

And today I can announce that, together with Japan, the United States put forward a draft resolution, reaffirming the fundamental obligations that parties have under that Treaty and further calling on Member States to not develop any nuclear weapons or other kinds of weapons of mass destruction that are specifically designed to be placed in orbit around Earth. We look forward to engaging with the Council to forge consensus around that text.

And outside of the Council, we are interested in engaging with States parties to the Outer Space Treaty to explore ways to increase confidence in compliance with article IV. The United States has already begun considering approaches to help ensure that countries cannot deploy nuclear weapons in orbit undetected. And we intend to engage with other States parties as our ideas evolve.

Sixty years ago, the world faced a choice: escalation towards nuclear war or cooperation and non-proliferation. Today, as we face that same choice, we must not allow our differences to prevent us from taking action on the critical matter of international security. In the words of President Kennedy,

“Confident and unafraid, we labour on — not towards a strategy of annihilation but towards a strategy of peace.”

The United States will continue to lead by example, in good faith and with all Council members and Member States in that pursuit.

Ms. Alghali (Sierra Leone): I thank you, Madam President, for convening this high-level briefing on the critical issue of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. Let me also thank Secretary-General António Guterres, Mr. Robert Floyd and Ms. Gaukhar Mukhatzhanova for their valuable and informative briefings. Sierra Leone commends Japan for its leadership in convening this important meeting and looks forward to engaging in constructive discussions aimed at enhancing international peace and security in a nuclear-free world.

At the outset Sierra Leone recalls that, in January 1947, the Council accepted, as one of its most urgent tasks, the global elimination of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) in line with General Assembly resolution 41(I), underlining that the general reduction of armaments and armed forces was an important measure to strengthen and maintain international peace and security. Regrettably events overtook the early Security Council WMD initiatives, ending the Council's substantive work on the regulation of armaments based on Article 26.

Sierra Leone commends the General Assembly, as envisaged in the Charter of the United Nations, for stepping in and being instrumental over the years in the adoption of treaties regulating WMDs, including the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) in 1968, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) in 1996 and the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) in 2017.

Sierra Leone reiterates that the NPT is the cornerstone of the global nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation architecture and a key instrument in the efforts to halt vertical and horizontal proliferation of nuclear weapons, an essential foundation for the pursuit of nuclear disarmament. It has been a historic success, and Sierra Leone is encouraged by the progress made on the second and third pillars of the Treaty. However, we are concerned that the nuclear disarmament pillar has made very slow and disappointing overall progress.

Sierra Leone reiterates that nuclear disarmament continues to be of the highest priority, and the total elimination of nuclear weapons is the only guarantee

against the use or threat of use. Therefore, we reiterate our call for a balanced implementation of the three pillars of the NPT.

While we commend the Council, including many countries and organizations, for their tireless efforts in taking initiatives to tackle non-proliferation and WMDs over the years, Sierra Leone deplores that since 2010 the level of Council engagement on disarmament has fallen and debates on general disarmament and its role in the maintenance of international peace and security are few and far between.

This high-level briefing on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation presents a timely and significant opportunity for the international community to reaffirm its commitment to advancing the goals of disarmament and non-proliferation.

The recent developments in the global nuclear landscape underscore the urgent need for collective action to address the escalating risks associated with nuclear weapons. The picture of the growing nuclear risks is grim and gravely concerning. In that regard, we note that there is extensive modernization of nuclear arsenals, as reported in 2023; there is increasing military expenditure; the strategic stability dialogue between the two major nuclear-weapon States has been halted; there is a withdrawal from the 2010 New START Treaty, the last remaining nuclear arms control agreement capping the strategic nuclear forces of the two major nuclear-weapon States; and the negotiations for a successor to the New START Treaty are being put on hold.

There is no gainsaying that a nuclear war can never be won and should never be fought. However, the possession of nearly all of the world's more than 12,000 nuclear weapons by a minute number of Member States, along with the recent rhetoric threatening to use them, remains a significant concern. Despite a long-standing legal obligation to eliminate nuclear weapons, certain member States continue to invest heavily in their nuclear arsenals without advancing any meaningful solutions for disarmament. We also note with alarm the escalation in missile capabilities and increased plutonium production, along with uranium-enrichment activities by certain States. Furthermore, we note the failure of two consecutive NPT Review Conferences, setbacks faced by the Preparatory Committee for the 2026 NPT Review Conference during the first session and the failure of the Conference on Disarmament to

agree on a programme of work, preventing it from initiating substantive deliberations. In the light of growing tension among nuclear-armed States and the heightened threat perceptions resulting from recent geopolitical developments, it is imperative that the Security Council take decisive steps to address those challenges and mitigate the risks of nuclear conflict.

While some nuclear-weapon States would argue that, with the current prevailing circumstances, the security environment is not conducive for nuclear disarmament or the total elimination of nuclear weapons, Sierra Leone, as a non-nuclear-weapon State, avers that it is for the very same reason of global security tensions, the threat of use and the possibility of miscalculations that nuclear disarmament must remain the highest priority and must begin now.

The continued possession of nuclear weapons and the endorsement of nuclear deterrence perpetuate instability and insecurity for all nations. Instead of preventing their usage, nuclear deterrence policies have enabled conflict and heightened the risk of nuclear weapons use. The spectre of nuclear catastrophe looms over major conflicts in regions such as Ukraine, the Middle East and the Korean peninsula.

The only effective way to prevent the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons is through their total elimination. That necessitates rejecting the dangerous theories of nuclear deterrence. Sierra Leone calls on all nuclear-weapon States to engage bilaterally and multilaterally to make nuclear disarmament a reality and to unequivocally commit to transparent, complete, verifiable, irreversible and non-discriminatory nuclear disarmament.

In that context, Sierra Leone welcomes the entry into force of the landmark Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons on 22 January 2021. Sierra Leone is encouraged by the steady progress of the TPNW. To date, 93 States have signed the TPNW, including Sierra Leone, and 70 have ratified or acceded to it. The Meetings of States Parties to the TPNW, including the most recent one in November 2023, have advanced an ambitious action plan towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons. My delegation believes that the TPNW serves as a complementary instrument to the NPT and will end the long impasse in multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations. Sierra Leone therefore

calls on all States to support and join the TPNW as a matter of urgency to advance the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons.

In addition, Sierra Leone express concern about nuclear-weapon States that have not signed or ratified the CTBT, 28 years since its establishment, thereby hampering its entry into force. We urge Member States that have revoked their ratification to rejoin the CTBT. Sierra Leone welcomes the adoption of resolution 2310 (2016) and urges all States that have either not signed or ratified the CTBT to do so without further delay.

Sierra Leone recommends that the Security Council consider issuing a presidential statement or resolution that outlines concrete confidence-building measures to reduce the threat of nuclear war and delineates strategies for advancing nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. Such a Council product could serve as a catalyst for renewed international efforts to promote disarmament and enhance global security. Furthermore, Sierra Leone recommends the Security Council tasks the Secretary-General with preparing a comprehensive report that offers actionable recommendations on how the Council, the General Assembly and other relevant United Nations bodies can collaborate more effectively to address the complex challenges of nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. Enhanced cooperation and coordination within the United Nations system is essential for advancing the shared goal of a world free of nuclear weapons.

Sierra Leone also underscores the importance of promoting the equal, full and effective participation of women in all decision-making processes related to disarmament, as recommended by the Secretary-General in his report *Securing our Common Future: An Agenda for Disarmament*. Women play a crucial role in advancing peace and security, and their inclusion in disarmament efforts is essential for achieving sustainable progress in that critical area.

In conclusion, Sierra Leone reaffirms its unwavering commitment to the principles of disarmament, non-proliferation and international peace and security. We recognize the paramount importance of concerted global efforts to address the challenges posed by nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction and stand ready to engage constructively with all Member States to advance our collective efforts towards a safer and more secure world for present and future generations.

Mr. Hwang (Republic of Korea): I thank you, Madam President, for arranging this important meeting. I would also like to express my gratitude to Secretary-General António Guterres, Executive Secretary Floyd and Director Mukhatzhanova for their briefings.

Throughout human history, the evolution of foundational technology has had only one direction: it spreads far and wide. From wheels to the printing press, combustion engines and electricity, such technology became cheaper and more available. Such proliferation of technology applied to weapons as well. Whether it was bows and arrows or gunpowder, weapons technologies, in time, disseminated all over the world and then were used.

However, one technology bucks the trend, and that is nuclear weapons. Witnessing their deadly and devastating impacts in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the international community has managed to contain the use and proliferation of nuclear weapons. Such a colossal feat is not an accidental achievement, but the result of extraordinary and commendable multilateral efforts by the international community. Pledges from both nuclear-weapon States and non-nuclear-weapon States for nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation have spared us from nuclear apocalypse.

The culmination of those efforts is the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). While the NPT serves as the cornerstone of the non-proliferation regime, other key norms and initiatives, such as the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and a fissile-material cut-off treaty, are also crucial for nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

Regrettably, however, the current state of affairs indicates that this hard-fought and hard-won architecture is now being challenged more than ever before.

First, the threat of the use of nuclear weapons has become an unprecedented concern to the international community. We hear precarious and irresponsible nuclear rhetoric amid Russia's war of aggression on Ukraine. Russia's tactical nuclear weapons are now deployed in Belarus, and its CTBT ratification was withdrawn. The New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty is suspended. And in another part of the world, rapid and opaque nuclear build-up under the guise of modernization is being reported, while genuine dialogue for disarmament is turned away.

All of those developments have decreased the level of confidence in the nuclear-weapon States' commitment to disarmament.

Secondly, the prospect of non-proliferation is no less bleak. Indeed, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the world's pre-eminent proliferator, continues to blatantly violate multiple Security Council resolutions and develop its nuclear and missile programmes.

While we are discussing non-proliferation at the Chamber, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea continues its provocations, including yesterday's launches of multiple ballistic missiles, supposedly targeting densely populated areas and key military installations of my country. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea vows to launch three more military reconnaissance satellites this year using ballistic missiles technology and provides ballistic missiles to Russia, in violation of the relevant Security Council resolutions. Pyongyang now has a markedly low threshold for using nuclear weapons. Its aggressive nuclear policy even allows for pre-emptive strikes against the Republic of Korea, which Kim Jong Un has declared a principal foreign enemy State. And we should be concerned about the conclusion reached by the International Atomic Energy Agency that it has lost continuity of knowledge on parts of Iran's ongoing nuclear activities.

Thirdly, the rapid advancement of emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence (AI), may add to the existing challenges to the global non-proliferation regime. As the ultimate enabler, AI has the potential to transform all aspects of military affairs. If the governance to ensure the responsible use of AI lags behind, the world will be left with more vulnerability, including the potential risk of an accidental or unauthorized use of nuclear weapons.

Furthermore, new domains such as outer space and cyberspace have introduced new complexities. The placement of nuclear weapons in outer space or illicit cyberspace activities to gain technology or finance weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) can undermine the global disarmament and non-proliferation architecture.

Against that backdrop, the Security Council should stand at the very forefront of addressing these complex yet monumental challenges.

First, the Security Council should enforce vital global norms. Through its resolutions and sanctions regimes, the Council must respond to violations of

non-proliferation obligations. It should ensure that all sanctions resolutions, which are legally binding on all Member States, are fully implemented. As a legal maxim goes, impunity always leads to greater violations. The Security Council should also make the best use of its own tools to ensure the full implementation of its resolutions, including those of its subsidiary organs, such as the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1718 (2006) and its Panel of Experts.

Secondly, just as the Security Council took the initiative 20 years ago to respond to the threat from the linkage between non-State actors and WMDs, with resolution 1540 (2004), the Security Council should take greater interest in leading a dialogue and deliberations on the new trends and crucial new topics of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, in particular concerning AI, cyberspace and outer space. The Republic of Korea will strive to bring a breath of fresh air in that regard.

Thirdly, in doing all this, the Security Council should lead by example. The Council is entrusted with the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. If we are to be able to act on behalf of all Member States to carry out our duties, there should be no place for inaction or contradictory measures.

In that regard, a permanent member and depository of the NPT should bear a special sense of responsibility not to shake, but to uphold the decades-old international architecture. In particular, said member's military cooperation with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, running counter to the Security Council's own decisions, would result in the erosion of the very authority and relevance of the Council.

The film *Oppenheimer* gives us a lot to reflect on. The quote: "they will not fear it until they understand it, and they will not understand it until they have used it" is indeed chilling and prescient. Nuclear weapons have been used, and we understand and fear them. Let us take further determined steps to maintain and strengthen the NPT regime in the name of the Security Council. The Republic of Korea remains steadfast in its commitment to that noble endeavour.

Mr. De La Gasca (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me to congratulate Her Excellency Ms. Kamikawa Yoko, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan and President of the Security Council, on her impeccable

leadership of the Council during the month of March. I thank her for convening this highly relevant debate for the United Nations.

I highlight the briefing of Secretary-General António Guterres and recognize, once again, his actions to promote disarmament, non-proliferation and world peace. I also thank the briefers, Mr. Robert Floyd and Ms. Gaukhar Mukhatzhanova, for their presentations.

Nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation is a moral and ethical responsibility that the international community must address with determination and concerted action. We are at a critical moment in history, where global stability, security and the existence of future generations hang in the balance, as it is a fact that, since their inception, nuclear weapons have cast humankind under the shadow of potential devastation. Their use would have catastrophic consequences and irreversible effects on the environment, the global economy and life itself on our planet.

It is imperative that all States, especially those with nuclear arsenals, commit to reduce and eliminate their stockpiles and adopt tangible measures to that end in order to avoid their accidental or deliberate use, as well as to foster a climate of trust and cooperation among nations.

Ecuador reaffirms that the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is the cornerstone of the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation architecture and that the contracting parties must comply with their international obligations under the Treaty. The upcoming NPT Review Conference is an invaluable opportunity to achieve progress and commitments.

I call for the signature and ratification of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, an instrument that complements the NPT. The joint functionality of those instruments is necessary in order to ban nuclear weapons and provides practical and concrete actions to that end. In addition, I reaffirm the importance of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and stress the need for its early entry into force.

My country will continue to promote the entrenchment of nuclear-weapon-free zones and, in doing so, recalls the importance of the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean, which made Latin America and the Caribbean the first nuclear-weapon-free zone in a densely populated region.

Control and verification mechanisms must be strengthened in order to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons to State or non-State actors. The unanimous adoption of resolution 1540 (2004) in April 2004, almost 20 years ago, was an important and timely step in the Security Council's efforts to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, their means of delivery, as well as related materials to non-State actors. As such, resolution 1540 (2004) has become a vital component of the global non-proliferation architecture.

The Council has the responsibility to lead global efforts for nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. The existence of even one additional nuclear weapon increases the risk of global catastrophe. As such, the Council must be united in its commitment to prevent that from occurring. Doing so will entail adopting firm resolutions, complying with decisions already taken, fostering dialogue among parties concerned and promoting international cooperation on disarmament and non-proliferation, especially on the issues that the Council remains seized of in relation to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the nuclear issue involving the Islamic Republic of Iran.

My delegation recognizes the valuable contribution of women to decision-making and practice in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation. The Council should continue working to ensure the full, meaningful and effective participation of women in nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation processes.

It is important to recognize that nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation require long-term commitment, perseverance and political will on the part of all Member States. The future of humankind depends on the ability to overcome our differences and work together to achieve a world free of nuclear weapons, for, as Ecuador will never tire of repeating, there are no good hands for nuclear weapons.

Mr. De Rivière (France) (*spoke in French*): First of all, I would like to thank you, Madam President, for organizing this meeting, and I would like to thank the Secretary-General and the other speakers for their briefings.

We are meeting against a backdrop of unprecedented weakening of arms control and non-proliferation instruments. Russia's irresponsible rhetoric in the context of its war of aggression against Ukraine is a reminder of the imperative of preventing nuclear war and the arms race. France reiterates its commitment to the

joint statement of the leaders of the five nuclear-weapon States adopted on 3 January 2022, which stresses that a nuclear war cannot be won and should never be fought. We call on all States that possess nuclear weapons to join the statement. France is determined to work to achieve the ultimate goal of a world without nuclear weapons with undiminished security for all. The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons remains the essential instrument for that purpose.

First, nuclear disarmament can be achieved only through a gradual and realistic approach, based on concrete measures that take the strategic context into account. It is vital to continue the efforts necessary to reduce the largest stockpiles of global nuclear arsenals. France has contributed to those efforts, reducing its own arsenal to a level of strict sufficiency for its own security. We encourage all nuclear-weapon States to adopt effective transparency measures concerning their nuclear forces and the size of their arsenals. France deplores Russia's suspension of the New START Treaty and urges it to reverse that decision.

France supports the immediate launch of negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT) at the Conference on Disarmament on the basis of the Shannon mandate. France joined the FMCT friends group to promote that future treaty. I thank Japan for that initiative. France remains committed to the early entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and supports efforts to establish zones free of weapons of mass destruction. We reaffirm our commitment to the 1967 Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies, which prohibits the placement of nuclear weapons or any other weapons of mass destruction in space. Violation of that norm would constitute an additional destabilizing factor. We call upon all States to respect international law and their obligations under that Treaty.

Secondly, we must respond firmly to proliferation crises, which pose a direct threat to international peace and security. North Korea's pursuit of its nuclear and ballistic programmes violates the resolutions adopted unanimously by the Council. We are concerned about reports of arms deliveries, including of ballistic missiles, between Russia and North Korea. We once again call on North Korea to cease its destabilizing activities and to engage in discussions aimed at complete, irreversible and verifiable denuclearization.

The escalation of Iran's nuclear programme is gathering pace. The latest reports from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) show a stockpile of highly enriched uranium well in excess of the limits set by the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. Such activities have no credible civilian purpose. We are also very concerned about the lack of progress in resolving outstanding safeguards issues. Iran can no longer evade its obligations under the Non-Proliferation Treaty safeguards regime. We remain committed to ensuring that Iran will never be capable of developing nuclear weapons. We urge Iran to resume compliance with its international commitments, and we remain ready to seek a diplomatic solution.

Finally, France is committed to the safe and responsible development of the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, in strict compliance with the IAEA non-proliferation safeguards regime. We are concerned about the situation at the Zaporizhzhya power plant, which has been illegally occupied by Russia since March 2022. We reiterate our support for the IAEA's seven pillars of nuclear safety and security and the five principles set out by the Director General of the IAEA to ensure the safety of that plant. We call on Russia to halt its militarization and stop fuelling the risk of a nuclear accident.

Mr. Zhang Jun (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I welcome you, Madam President, to the Council to preside over this meeting, and I thank Secretary-General Guterres and the other briefers for their briefings.

The complete prohibition and thorough destruction of nuclear weapons and the eventual establishment of a nuclear weapon-free world is an abiding aspiration of the international community. In today's world, the international security environment is undergoing a confluence of changes and turbulence, with the Cold War mentality rearing its ugly head, while the risk of a nuclear arms race and nuclear conflict is rising, and the issue of nuclear proliferation remains a prominent one.

The road to nuclear disarmament remains long and arduous. Chinese President Xi Jinping has put forward a global security initiative, emphasizing the need to adhere to the concept of common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security; respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries; respect of the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations; attention to the legitimate security concerns of all countries; the resolution of

differences and disputes among countries through dialogue, consultation and peaceful means and the integrated maintenance of security in both the traditional and non-traditional spheres. The global security initiative advocates adapting to the profoundly adjusted international landscape in a spirit of solidarity and responding to complex and intertwined security challenges with a win-win mindset — with the aim of eliminating the root causes of international conflicts, improving global security governance and promoting joint international security efforts to instil more stability and certainty into our turbulent and changing times, and with a view to realizing lasting peace and development in the world.

It is the common aspiration and the goal of the international community to build a universally secure world. Countries should join hands in practicing genuine multilateralism, adhere to a concept of common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security, resolutely rejecting the Cold War mentality and bloc confrontation, continuously strengthening the authority and effectiveness of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and joining efforts to promote nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

First, we should adhere to the concept of common security and shape a stable strategic security environment. President Xi Jinping has repeatedly made it clear that nuclear weapons must never be used and a nuclear war never fought, and that the international community should jointly oppose the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. In 2022, the leaders of the five nuclear-weapon States issued a joint statement on the prevention of a nuclear war, emphasizing that a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought. On that basis, nuclear-weapon States should explore feasible measures to reduce strategic risks, negotiate and conclude a treaty on no first use of nuclear weapons against each other and provide legally binding negative security assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States. The countries concerned should reduce the role of nuclear weapons in their national and collective security policies, renounce the deployment of a global missile defence system, refrain from seeking the deployment of intermediate range missiles in the Asia Pacific region or in Europe, and stop nuclear sharing and so-called extended deterrence so as to maintain the global strategic balance and stability through practical actions. Countries should continue to enhance the safety,

reliability and controllability of artificial intelligence technology and ensure that relevant weapon systems are under human control at all times.

Secondly, we should adhere to a rational and pragmatic approach and promote international nuclear disarmament in a gradual and steady manner. Nuclear-weapon States should abide by the consensus on nuclear disarmament reached at the previous NPT Review Conferences and make a public commitment not to seek permanent possession of nuclear weapons. Nuclear weapons are a product of history and nuclear disarmament will naturally have a historical process. Demanding that countries with vastly different nuclear policies and number of nuclear weapons should assume the same level of nuclear disarmament and nuclear transparency obligations is not consistent with the logic of history or reality, nor is it in line with international consensus, and as such, will lead international nuclear disarmament only to a dead end.

The United States allegations against China are totally groundless and do not hold any water. It is precisely the United States that should continue to fulfil its special and primary responsibility to further reduce its nuclear arsenals in a drastic and substantive manner, so as to create the conditions for other nuclear-weapon States to join the nuclear disarmament process and play a lead-by-example role recognized by all parties rather than one that is self-styled.

Thirdly, we should commit to a political solution and safeguard the international nuclear non-proliferation regime. Non-proliferation hotspot issues, such as the ones on the Korean peninsula and with Iran, have complex historical backgrounds and are closely linked to the continuity of the non-proliferation policies of the relevant countries. All parties should adhere to political and diplomatic efforts to address each other's legitimate security concerns through dialogue and balanced solutions, and the United States should abandon the threat of use and the use of sanctions and pressure.

The nuclear submarine cooperation of the United States with certain countries carries a high risk of nuclear proliferation. It is a serious violation of the objective and the purpose of the NPT and undermines regional peace and stability. Therefore, corrective measures should be taken to rectify it and bring it back to the right path.

Nuclear-weapon States should sign and ratify the protocols to the nuclear-weapon-free-zone treaties as soon as possible, and China reaffirms its readiness to

take the lead in signing the protocol to the Treaty on the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone and its firm support for the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction.

Fourthly, we should adhere to the original intent of common development and promote the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. Development is the cornerstone of peace and security. The international community should pay attention to the needs of developing countries for the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and increase relevant financial and technical assistance to help to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The International Atomic Energy Agency should play a greater role in promoting cooperation and assistance in areas of nuclear power, applications of nuclear technology and nuclear safety and security. Relevant countries should stop stretching the concept of national security, stop drawing lines on the basis of ideology and stop using, under the pretext of non-proliferation, export control as a political tool to suppress other countries and to pursue its agenda of decoupling and severing supply chain ties.

China has always advocated the complete prohibition and thorough destruction of nuclear weapons. Sixty years ago, China solemnly declared that it would not be the first to use nuclear weapons at any time or under any circumstances. That demonstrated the great transparency of its policy and its highly responsible attitude. It has maintained a high degree of stability and continuity and is itself a major contribution to international nuclear disarmament. Regardless of changes in the international landscape, China has always abided by that commitment, firmly pursued its nuclear strategy of self-defence, refrained from participating in any form of nuclear arms race, continued to maintain its nuclear forces at the minimum level required for its national security and continued to work to promote international nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

Mr. Žbogar (Slovenia): I would like to welcome you, Madam President, in the Council. I would like to thank Secretary-General Guterres, Executive Secretary Floyd and Director Mukhatzhanova for their valuable insights today.

As many Council members recalled today, a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought. Achieving a world without nuclear weapons remains our common and ultimate goal.

However, we are deeply concerned about the continuous erosion of the international architecture of non-proliferation.

Let me therefore make three points today.

First, there is a need to uphold and further strengthen the global nuclear non-proliferation regime. In the current complex global security environment, this is urgent. The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) remains the cornerstone of the international non-proliferation architecture. Non-proliferation obligations under the NPT, and the relevant Security Council resolutions should be consistently implemented.

The safeguards system presents an indispensable role in preventing the spread of nuclear weapons. We will continue to support the International Atomic Energy Agency and its efforts to ensure that States are honouring their international legal obligations to use nuclear material and technology for peaceful purposes only.

At the same time, we deeply appreciate the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization's role in detecting non-proliferation violations and upholding the global norm against nuclear testing. The efforts of Executive Secretary, Mr. Floyd, for CTBT universalization are bearing fruit, as reported by him this morning. We very much welcome the continuation of those efforts. At the same time, we regret Russia's revocation of the ratification of the Treaty.

Secondly, we need to end the deadlock on nuclear disarmament. The last two NPT Review Conferences have failed to demonstrate any progress in the field of nuclear disarmament, while bilateral arms reduction treaties have been slowly waning, most recently with Russia's suspension of the New START Treaty. How can we end the deadlock? An NPT-based step-by-step approach combining bilateral and multilateral elements seems to be the most feasible way forward. For that reason, Slovenia supports the 22 incremental steps outlined by the Stockholm Initiative for Nuclear Disarmament.

As long as nuclear weapons exist, the risk of their use remains real. Slovenia is especially concerned about the lowering of thresholds for the use and threat of use of tactical nuclear weapons. Maintaining an option for the first use of low-yield weapons in nuclear doctrines is irresponsible and simply wrong.

Thirdly, Ms. Mukhatzhanova reminded us today of the relevance of resolution 984 (1995) by which the Council recognized the security assurances of the nuclear-weapon States against the use of nuclear weapons to non-nuclear-weapon States. It also affirmed that the Council would act immediately in the event that non-nuclear States are victims of an act, or object of a threat of aggression, in which nuclear weapons are used. We therefore expect that the Council members will be able to renew that commitment to NPT member States.

Finally, women remain underrepresented in the fields of nuclear policy, disarmament and non-proliferation. We know that women are powerful agents of change, and perhaps their full inclusion in nuclear decision-making processes can empower us all to bring about the long-awaited breakthrough in nuclear disarmament efforts towards a world without nuclear weapons.

Mr. Kariuki (United Kingdom): I am grateful to Japan for convening this important meeting, and to the Secretary-General, Mr. Floyd and Ms. Mukhatzhanova for their briefings.

For 50 years, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) has been a bulwark for global security, allowing peaceful uses of nuclear technologies to flourish while preventing the erosion of non-proliferation norms. The United Kingdom remains committed to full and complete disarmament in line with article VI of the NPT. We reaffirm the 2022 statement by the leaders of the five permanent members of the Council that a nuclear war cannot be won and must not be fought. The United Kingdom is the only nuclear-weapon State to have reduced to one delivery system, and we maintain a minimum credible deterrent. We have pioneered work in nuclear disarmament verification, championing transparency and advancing risk reduction. We are one of the largest financial contributors to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization and host 13 of its monitoring facilities.

The Council cannot be complacent about nuclear proliferation. We must continue to counter the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's nuclear programme, and we urge the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to commit to denuclearization. The Panel of Experts established pursuant to resolution 1718 (2006) carries out important work and must retain the Council's full support. We also call on Iran and Syria to

cooperate fully with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), and express grave concern that Iran's nuclear programme has never been more advanced than it is today.

It is deeply concerning that Russia, which played an important role in building the international non-proliferation and arms control architecture, has suspended its obligations under the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty, de-ratified the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and breached resolutions on Iran and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to source weapons for its illegal war in Ukraine. We urge Russia to reaffirm its commitment to its international obligations.

Our non-proliferation architecture supports and enables the peaceful use of nuclear technologies worldwide. The United Kingdom is helping to expand access to peaceful nuclear technology in support of the Sustainable Development Goals through our Sustained Dialogue on Peaceful Uses initiative, and we have given \$4.3 million in funding to the IAEA Technical Cooperation Fund this year. Next month marks 20 years since the Council adopted resolution 1540 (2004), helping to prevent non-State actors' access to weapons of mass destruction materials, and I take this opportunity to thank Ecuador for its stewardship.

Combating nuclear non-proliferation and promoting disarmament is a global challenge. We call on all States that have not yet done so to ratify the NPT. A strong Non-Proliferation Treaty means a more secure world. The United Kingdom is committed to a successful Review Conference in 2026 and looks forward to working with all United Nations Members to that end.

Mrs. Baeriswyl (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): I would like to join my colleagues in thanking Japan for putting this issue on the Council's agenda. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General, Ms. Mukhatzhanova and Mr. Floyd for their interventions and participation.

The suffering of the hundreds of thousands of victims of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki was etched on the collective conscience of humankind in August 1945 and must never be forgotten. Awareness of that traumatic rupture is underlined by the fact that the first resolution (resolution 1 (I)) adopted by the General Assembly in January 1946 was dedicated to nuclear disarmament. For decades, preventing the further use of nuclear weapons was the real *raison d'être* of the

United Nations. Our Organization has played a decisive role in that respect by enabling dialogue even between the hardest fronts, even in moments of extreme tension.

For we should remember that, when the world was on the brink of collapse, during the Cuban missile crisis, the leaders of the time were able to take a step towards each other in order to contain the most frightening dangers. That moment of maximum tension led to the beginnings of *détente* and the development of multiple nuclear arms control instruments, including the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). And now we have understood that a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought.

At a time of geopolitical volatility when the risk of nuclear weapons being used is unprecedented since the end of the Cold War, it is our responsibility to ensure that that truth, lived by the victims of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, affirmed by Mr. Gorbachev and Mr. Reagan in 1985, and reaffirmed by the permanent members of this Council in January 2022, does not remain a dead letter.

To achieve that, we must first return to the path of nuclear disarmament, as the Secretary-General emphasizes in his New Agenda for Peace. Maintaining an international order based on international law and rules is essential for our collective security. Progress towards nuclear disarmament is an obligation under the NPT. The commitments made in that Treaty remain valid and must be implemented. We are concerned by the denunciation, and even violation, of essential nuclear arms control instruments. The three largest nuclear Powers have still not ratified the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). We call on them and all other States listed in annex 2 to the CTBT to sign and ratify that instrument without delay. Furthermore, the Council should play a key role in strengthening those norms. It should draw inspiration from its past actions, for example, its resolution 984 (1995), by which it granted negative security assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States.

At the same time, we must reduce nuclear risks. That is neither a substitute nor a prerequisite for nuclear disarmament. But the risks posed by the nuclear arms race are undeniable, and the recent nuclear rhetoric is to be condemned. In addition, new technologies, particularly in the field of digital technology and artificial intelligence, pose unprecedented challenges. Switzerland calls on the nuclear-weapon States to conduct a sustained dialogue on nuclear risk reduction with a view to adopting concrete

commitments. We encourage the five permanent members of the Council and the nuclear-weapon States to consider tangible confidence-building measures, for example, by establishing crisis communication channels to avoid misunderstandings between nuclear-weapon States. We also call on all States possessing nuclear weapons to be transparent about their policies, doctrines and arsenals.

Lastly, the global non-proliferation architecture must be maintained and strengthened; nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation being two sides of the same coin. The NPT has made a major contribution to limiting the number of States possessing nuclear weapons, hence the importance of doing everything possible to ensure its continued existence. Major concerns arise from the rapid development of nuclear and ballistic programmes in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the gradual unravelling of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action and the many open questions raised by the International Atomic Energy Agency reports on Iran. Switzerland recalls that the resolutions of the Council are binding and must be implemented by all Member States. We also call on all States to apply the highest standards of nuclear safeguards through a comprehensive safeguards agreement complemented by an additional protocol.

The Council has primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security. We must therefore provide responses to the current nuclear risks. The five permanent members have a particular responsibility to advance nuclear disarmament. They also have a duty to respect and maintain the pillars of the non-proliferation architecture. The renewal of the mandate of the Panel of Experts on the sanctions imposed on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, later this week, will be a further demonstration of that commitment. And, as Chair of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1718 (2006), I urge all members of the Council to engage constructively to preserve this important instrument for the Committee.

As the Secretary-General said in his address to the tenth NPT Review Conference: "peace cannot take place in the absence of trust and mutual respect". All States have a responsibility to help rebuild that trust. In that vein, the Pact for the Future represents an important opportunity to build on the lessons of the past by reaffirming and resuming the path towards a world free of nuclear weapons. Let us assume that responsibility now, in the present.

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett (Guyana): I thank the Japanese presidency for convening this briefing on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. I wish to also

thank Secretary-General Guterres for his statement and Executive Secretary Floyd and Director Mukhatzhanova for their briefings.

The current geopolitical environment is characterized by unprecedented levels of volatility, with multiple conflicts within, between and among States. In many instances, they involve the use of inherently indiscriminate weapons that violate multiple disarmament instruments and result in higher numbers of civilian deaths. All of that is happening against the backdrop of dangerous nuclear weapons rhetoric that seeks to normalize the threat of use of such weapons.

To proceed along that path is to walk head first into a global catastrophe. We must therefore frontally address threats to the global disarmament and non-proliferation architecture. In doing so, there is a need to enhance the role of the Security Council, strengthen the implementation of key non-proliferation instruments, ensure the responsible use of emerging technologies in nuclear disarmament and ensure women's participation in disarmament discussions and decision-making.

First, the Security Council has an important role to play in risk reduction by enhancing awareness and implementation of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation instruments. As established in Article 26 of the Charter of the United Nations and subsequent Security Council resolutions, the Council has a duty to promote peace with the least diversion of resources for armaments and a responsibility to confront threats posed to the global disarmament and non-proliferation architecture, including any non-compliance with such obligations.

Divesting from armaments can play a critical role in reducing the risk of a nuclear conflict. However, it is quite evident that emphasis is placed on the maintenance, modernization and acquisition of nuclear arsenals, while fewer resources are invested in development initiatives and in advancing the implementation of key non-proliferation instruments. That must change, and for the better. Notwithstanding the responsibilities of other organs of the United Nations, the Security Council must intensify its engagement and advance the regulation and reduction of armaments, including nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction.

In reducing the risk of nuclear conflict and strengthening the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and its associated regime, focus must also be placed on advancing implementation efforts

of the NPT and other key instruments, including the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which has made considerable progress. But more must be done.

Guyana acknowledges that new and emerging technologies pose challenges to the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regimes. In that regard, we advocate for those technologies to be regulated and used responsibly for the greater good. At the same time, we also advocate for their enhanced use in verification and monitoring in order to advance the global disarmament and non-proliferation agenda.

Finally, on the role of women, there is no doubt that women can contribute to achieving a world free of nuclear weapons. I wish to recall that resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and security, stresses the importance of women's equal participation in the maintenance and promotion of peace and security and the need to increase their role in decision-making.

As a signatory of the statement of shared commitments on women and peace and security, Guyana endorses the call for the United Nations to lead by example in ensuring the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in peace processes. We strongly believe that women must be part of disarmament discussions, at all levels, as they are disproportionately affected in conflicts and still underrepresented in decision-making.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate Guyana's commitment to the advancement of the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation agenda and to reaffirm that the only means of preventing the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons is through their total elimination.

Mrs. Frazier (Malta): I thank the Secretary-General and the briefers for their insightful briefings.

We thank Japan for holding this timely meeting. In the context of increased geopolitical tensions, the Security Council has an obligation to promote and strengthen nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, with the goal of achieving a nuclear-free world.

Malta has a long-standing and unwavering commitment to complete nuclear disarmament. The use of nuclear weapons can never be justifiable or acceptable. We can no longer allow the so-called deterrence doctrine. It is a paradoxical misconception and a threat to our existence.

As the Secretary-General noted in his New Agenda for Peace, the disarmament architecture is eroding. The non-proliferation regime is being violated. The two are inextricably linked and must be advanced in an organic way.

Risk reduction can never be a substitute for disarmament. Ultimately, the best way to ensure non-proliferation is the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

Civil society and women's peace movements also play a crucial role in this field. We welcome all efforts to promote the full, active and meaningful participation of women at all levels in all disarmament and non-proliferation forums.

Despite the failure of the past two Review Conferences to adopt an outcome document, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) remains the cornerstone of the nuclear non-proliferation regime. As a State party to the Treaty, we are fully committed to its objectives, and we reaffirm the need to achieve its universalization. We hope that the next Review Conference will bring substantive results.

The non-proliferation and disarmament regime is based on the balanced implementation of the three pillars of the Treaty. In that connection, we call on the nuclear-weapon States to fully implement article VI. Current tensions cannot be an excuse for the delay. Rather, they should be a reason to accelerate its implementation.

Malta has also signed and ratified the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, a landmark agreement that fills a legal gap as the first outright prohibition of nuclear weapons. The Treaty is fully compatible with and complementary to the NPT. It strengthens the safeguards system of the International Atomic Energy Agency. It also recognizes the gendered impact of nuclear weapons, including with regard to victim assistance. We will continue to advocate for its universalization, with the goal of creating momentum to revive international disarmament talks.

The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty is another fundamental pillar of the non-proliferation regime and is widely recognized as one of the most successful international instruments. We reaffirm our full commitment to the Treaty, and we commend the work of Executive Secretary Floyd towards its universalization. We deeply regret the withdrawal from the Treaty by one of the annex 2 States and continue to urge all States to ratify it without further delay.

The non-proliferation regime has been severely undermined by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Pyongyang has continuously advanced its unlawful programme of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs), including through the relentless testing of ballistic missiles. Such actions are in violation of multiple Council resolutions and sanctions regimes. They contribute to the erosion of the non-proliferation regime.

As we have said before, the threat posed by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's WMD programme goes beyond the Korean peninsula. Persistent silence and failure to act on the Council's part will embolden potential proliferators around the world. The Council proved its ability to come together on non-proliferation when it unanimously adopted resolution 1540 (2004) 20 years ago. We must continue to build upon those efforts. To that end, Malta will continue to support all efforts by the Security Council and other bodies. We also look forward to the next session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2026 NPT Review Conference.

Mr. Bendjama (Algeria): I am grateful to Japan for organizing this timely meeting. I would like to hail the efforts of Japan to achieve the objective of disarmament and non-proliferation. I express my gratitude to the Secretary-General for his statement. I thank Mr. Robert Floyd for his briefing, and I also listened carefully to Ms. Gaukhar Mukhatzhanova.

As we meet today, we are deeply concerned about the heightened international tensions and the looming threat of nuclear war. Nuclear disarmament is not merely a legal obligation but also a moral imperative, since nuclear weapons continue to represent the most serious threat to humankind and to its survival. The catastrophic humanitarian consequences of those weapons are a reminder of their devastating effects. We are alarmed by the lack of progress on the fulfilment of nuclear disarmament commitments, despite the efforts of most Member States. In that context, I would like to highlight the following key points.

First, as a steadfast advocate of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), Algeria urges the nuclear-weapon States to honour their obligations under article VI and to take tangible steps towards nuclear disarmament. We also call upon the States not party to the NPT to join the Treaty as non-nuclear-weapon States without delay and without conditions. The inability to reach consensus at the two previous NPT Review Conferences is a major concern for Algeria. We implore all States parties, particularly the nuclear-weapon States, to engage constructively to uphold the integrity of the NPT regime.

Secondly, Algeria welcomes the entry into force of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and the adoption of the Vienna Declaration and the Vienna Action Plan.

Thirdly, we stress the critical importance of the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty

and urge the remaining annex 2 countries to sign and ratify it.

Fourthly, nuclear-weapon-free zones are the essential building blocks of a world without nuclear weapons. As one of the first African States to ratify the Treaty of Pelindaba, Algeria is steadfast in its commitment to the implementation thereof. We also emphasize the imperative of establishing a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East and commend the successful convening of the United Nations conference dedicated to that objective. The condemnation voiced by the Member States that participated in the conference and the denunciation of Israel's nuclear threats, particularly the threat to use nuclear weapons on Gaza, must be translated into meaningful action.

In conclusion, Algeria calls for a legally binding instrument on negative security assurances for all non-nuclear-weapon States and for the negotiation of a treaty banning the production of fissile material, including the stockpiles thereof.

Mr. Polyanskiy (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank Secretary-General António Guterres and the Executive Secretary of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization, Mr. Robert Floyd, for their briefings. We also listened very carefully to the Programme Director at the Vienna Centre for Disarmament and Non-Proliferation, Ms. Gaukhar Mukhatzhanova.

Today's meeting is a very good opportunity for us to recall the catastrophic consequences that the use of nuclear weapons can have. We understand how extremely sensitive this issue is for Japan, a country that became the victim of the use of nuclear weapons by the United States. As a result of the nuclear bombing by United States armed forces in August 1945, the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were destroyed. That is the only instance in human history in which nuclear weapons were used not for the purposes of testing, but for military and political purposes and against civilians.

We regret that the Japanese representatives themselves, while they spread spurious propaganda about the supposedly threatening nuclear rhetoric from Russia, do not find the courage to directly point to the country responsible for the deaths of hundreds of thousands of their own citizens, namely, the United States of America. That is precisely why it is crucial to preserve the historical memory of the horrific consequences of Washington's reckless move, no matter how long ago it was. As far as we can tell, Washington has never repented of that step or drawn any conclusions from it. The fact that not one of the

Security Council members who did mention Hiroshima and Nagasaki today actually mentioned that Washington was responsible serves only to embolden our American colleagues and feeds into their illusory belief in their own infallibility and impunity.

Council members should consider what kind of role they can claim in resolving international issues if they insist on adopting such an ostrich-like policy and are afraid of calling obvious and indisputable things by their names, even in a historical context. That becomes particularly important when we look at today's disheartening situation in the area of international security and strategic stability. And that is an outcome of a consistent, long-standing policy of the United States and its allies aimed at undermining the international architecture of arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. In an attempt to garner the maximum free reign possible, Washington has either consistently withdrawn from fundamental agreements in this area, such as the Treaty between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on the Limitation of Anti-Ballistic Missile Systems, the Treaty between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on the Elimination of Their Intermediate-Range and Shorter-Range Missiles and the Treaty on Open Skies, or it made sure that implementing the relevant agreements would be impossible, as was the case with the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe and the bilateral Treaty between the United States of America and the Russian Federation on Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms. By now, the West has completely thrown off its mask and does not even try to hide the fact that it wants to inflict a strategic defeat on my country. The rampant Russophobic course of the United States and its allies is fraught with a danger of escalation which could trigger a direct military confrontation between nuclear States.

We have heard today from our Western colleagues a whole range of absurd allegations and accusations, including in the context of the subject of Ukraine, which have nothing to do with reality. The leadership of my country has repeatedly emphasized that those allegations are completely groundless. The conditions under which nuclear weapons can be used are clearly stipulated in our nuclear doctrine, which we strictly adhere to. We regret that not a single word of condemnation was uttered today against those who are indeed fuelling the nuclear rhetoric. For example, the Secretary of Defense of the United States, Lloyd Austin, who affirmed the use of the full range of defence capabilities, including nuclear weapons, within the framework of extended deterrence on the

Korean peninsula, or the Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who threateningly asserted that "Iran must face a credible nuclear threat". We also remember how easily those in London were prepared to push the nuclear button. We also see in Paris an increase in irresponsible rhetoric, which risks plunging the world into the depths of a nuclear war.

Unfortunately, the overwhelming majority of the initiatives of our Western colleagues, though wrapped beautifully, in reality turn out to be duds and are at best just self-promotion on their part. For example, the draft resolution on the non-placement of nuclear weapons in outer space mentioned by the United States, which was submitted at the end of last week, is, according to our preliminary assessment, a highly politicized document that is divorced from reality. That is not surprising, since its wording had not been worked out by the experts in any way nor had it been discussed at specialized international forums, including the Conference on Disarmament or the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space. We are left therefore with a strong impression that the draft resolution is just another propaganda stunt by Washington.

Of course, all of us would like to wake up one day in a world that is free of conflicts and has no strategic risks. We do share the noble goal of having a world free of nuclear weapons, but at this point that goal seems rather distant. The possession of nuclear weapons at this stage is an important factor in maintaining strategic balance. It is important to understand that upending that balance would plunge the world into the chaos of endless wars and attempts to establish hegemony by force.

Real progress towards nuclear disarmament can be achieved only through carefully considered step-by-step measures that are consistent with the principle of undiminished security and efforts to maintain strategic balance. We must adopt a comprehensive approach and act in accordance with the letter and spirit of article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), without attempting to single out individual elements from the general and complete disarmament process. At the same time, both nuclear and non-nuclear States bear responsibility for the improvement of the international situation and, as a result, the implementation of the disarmament provisions of the NPT.

There is no shortcut to a nuclear zero. That goal cannot be achieved either by immediately outlawing nuclear weapons or by trying to create a timeline for their elimination. How can one predict when humankind will be ready to abandon once and for all the military

approach to resolving disputes? No one knows the answer to that question. That is why the idea of an immediate unconditional rejection of nuclear weapons, as enshrined in the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, is counterproductive, erroneous and, under current conditions, essentially populist. Such an approach, which does not take into account the realities of strategic stability or the security interests of nuclear-weapon States, will lead to growing contradictions among States and undermine the authority of the NPT.

It is also important to recall that there are dedicated expert platforms for discussing nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation issues — the NPT review process, the First Committee of the General Assembly, the Conference on Disarmament and the Disarmament Commission. We see no convincing reason for discussing the topic of nuclear disarmament in the Security Council as well. The Council considers non-proliferation as it pertains to specific countries and through the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1540 (2004), where it looks into preventing weapons of mass destruction from falling into the hands of non-State actors.

We are very concerned that the non-proliferation regime, one of the fundamental elements of international security, is being seriously tested against the breakdown of the existing system of agreements on arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation. More than half a century of the NPT's history confirms its relevance for all Member States — both nuclear-weapon States and non-nuclear-weapon States alike. It should not be forgotten that the unique characteristic of the NPT, which enabled the Treaty back in the day to be signed and receive its near universality, is its very calibrated balance of three fundamental pillars: nuclear non-proliferation, nuclear disarmament and the peaceful use of nuclear energy.

As shown by the outcome of the tenth NPT Review Conference in 2022 and the outcome of the first session of the Preparatory Committee for the NPT Review Conference scheduled for 2026, divergences in views on nuclear disarmament continue to deepen. Meanwhile, some Western States are also adding fuel to the fire by politicizing the discussions in order to advance their own agendas. Let me recall that this is exactly how the draft outcome document of the 2022 Review Conference

got buried, as there was a deliberate introduction of provocative and a priori unacceptable anti-Russian passages that had nothing to do with the goal of nuclear non-proliferation.

The Russian Federation is firmly committed to the statement that a nuclear war cannot be won and should not be waged. That is precisely why we must prevent armed conflicts between nuclear-weapon States. In that regard, we expect our Western colleagues to abandon their extremely dangerous and destructive course.

Within the framework of new NPT review process, we are open to constructive dialogue with all countries interested in reaching a consensus on ways to create preconditions for further nuclear disarmament on the basis of strengthening international security and taking into account the interests of all parties.

As for the issue of the strategic dialogue between the United States and the Russian Federation with a view to new agreements on nuclear missile arms control, they cannot be divorced from the general political and military context. We see no basis for such work in the context of Western countries' attempts to inflict a "strategic defeat" on my country and their refusal to respect our vital interests. Any interaction in this area will be possible only if the United States and NATO radically reconsider their anti-Russian course and show they are ready to participate in a comprehensive dialogue that takes into account all major strategic stability factors and eliminates the root causes of our fundamental disagreements in terms of security.

We will be guided not by beautiful words and empty appeals, but rather by actions, which have thus far convincingly shown the lack of interest on the part of the United States and its allies in any serious conversation, one in which whole world is interested in, as we had a chance to see today. Hysterics and threats from Washington, London and Brussels do not impress us at all and do not change the general picture. The sooner our opponents realize that and stop shifting the blame, the better the chances are that the Doomsday Clock mentioned by the Secretary-General will at least slow down and, ideally, reverse its course.

The meeting rose at 12.30 p.m.