

Conference on Disarmament

English

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President: Mr. Salomon Eheth(Cameroon)



The President: Distinguished delegates, I call to order the 1582nd plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

As you know, today we have a debate on agenda item 5, new types of weapons of mass destruction and new systems of such weapons; radiological weapons. We will hear two speakers today. The first is Mr. Yuri Ambrazevich, a former President of the Conference; he is a member of the group of the six Presidents of the 2021 session, together with the last President of the 2020 session and the first of the 2022 session. He was the last President of the 2020 session and today will be our first speaker. Mr. Ambrazevich has been Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Republic of Belarus to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva since September 2015. He has often acted as coordinator of discussions on Conference agenda items 5, 6 and 7 and was coordinator of the subsidiary body on those agenda items in 2018. Under the presidency of Belarus, in 2020, Ambassador Ambrazevich organized a thematic discussion on emerging issues with a focus on new types of weapons of mass destruction. Furthermore, Belarus is the sponsor of the General Assembly resolution on new types of weapons of mass destruction and new systems of such weapons, which is adopted every three years, most recently in 2020. Mr. Ambrazevich, you have the floor.

Mr. Ambrazevich (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): Mr. President, distinguished colleagues, thank you for giving me the opportunity to take part in today's thematic discussion on a topic we consider extremely important and yet underappreciated. The Belarusian delegation considers the issues discussed by the Conference on Disarmament under item 5 and the two other items most closely related to it, 6 and 7, to be increasingly pertinent in today's world. In a context of rapidly developing scientific and technical progress and new technologies, they are now cross-cutting, affecting all aspects of disarmament-related work.

Rapid achievements in the digital sphere, including cybernetic weapons technology, progress in artificial intelligence and the automation of weapons systems, give rise to problems for international security and the existing disarmament architecture. Arguably, a completely new arena for the use of force in international relations has come into being for the first time since the appearance of nuclear weapons. Accordingly, ensuring international information security has become one of the most important issues facing States.

On the one hand, the Internet facilitates globalization and stimulates innovation. It creates enormous opportunities for socioeconomic development and may facilitate trade and the exchange of information. However, as society's dependence on the Internet increases, we become ever more vulnerable to malicious acts in cyberspace.

Cyberattacks, meaning unauthorized access to computers or digital networks, are becoming increasingly frequent and increasingly cunning. They can cause failures in infrastructure closely connected to information and communications technologies and systems. For example, electricity and mobile telephone networks could be threatened; personal data, business information and State secrets may be stolen in cyberattacks. The use of digital technologies to disseminate misinformation for political and military purposes is broadening in scope. The likelihood of cyberspace being used for terrorism, including to commit terrorist attacks, is increasing. Many States are building their capacity in military information and communications technology, whose use in potential inter-State conflicts is becoming ever more likely.

In this regard, we believe that, in forums dedicated to security and disarmament, States and international organizations should look specifically at information security. It is gratifying to see that international initiatives to combat digital security threats are now appearing. I would mention, for instance, the initiative of the President of Belarus on the creation of a "digital neighbours belt". Within such a belt, States – not only neighbouring ones, since virtual space has no borders – could conclude bilateral and multilateral international agreements to strengthen digital security and the joint struggle against cyberthreats.

We also think that the initiative of the International Committee of the Red Cross to combat cyberattacks against medical facilities on the front line of the response to the coronavirus disease pandemic is worthy of close and serious attention. In practice, such

cyberattacks range from ransomware attacks, aimed at paralysing primary and emergency care networks in exchange for payouts, to disinformation campaigns, aimed at undermining public confidence and pandemic response efforts in a broader context.

Another significant topic under this agenda item is autonomous weapons. Many of the latest achievements in weaponry are related to artificial intelligence, robotics and automation. A number of countries with developed military capabilities are developing and creating semi-autonomous and fully autonomous weapons systems, in which artificial intelligence is used for decision-making. Several States are looking at technologies that could give machines a higher degree of combat autonomy or make them fully autonomous. Lethal autonomous weapons systems will select and destroy targets without any human input. A small number of States have already deployed – within limits – systems with varying degrees of autonomy.

The High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Izumi Nakamitsu, has said that autonomous weapons systems will pose distinct proliferation challenges and may be sought out by unscrupulous actors with malicious intent. They may also have the capability to inflict massive human casualties at a fraction of the cost of existing military arsenals.

The question inevitably arises of whether autonomous weapons can ensure compliance with the rules of international humanitarian law. In the opinion of many experts, fully autonomous weapons systems may be unacceptable, as it is impossible to develop an adequate system of legal responsibility for their actions.

The international community's next steps regarding fully autonomous weapons systems will be decisive for their future and for all our futures. In the development of effective regulation strategies and procedures, a vitally important role will be played by transparency and cooperation, the preconditions of a high level of mutual trust. The Group of Governmental Experts on Emerging Technologies in the Area of Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems is playing a significant role in that process. The Group is enabling States to reconcile their approaches and move towards common decisions.

Naturally, the set of new threats and challenges is not exhausted by the two subjects I have mentioned. The risk of non-State groups obtaining weapons of mass destruction and of progress in science and technology being used to create new types of weapons of mass destruction should not be forgotten. The Belarusian delegation constantly strives to draw the attention of the international community to this subject, initiating discussions within and outside the Conference about possible threats, legal gaps and means of taking action. My intervention in our discussion today serves that purpose.

We believe that preventive measures and action are the best response to the new risks and threats to international peace and security at this stage, until the international community sits down to concrete negotiations. To perfect international procedures to make it possible to keep a close watch on the possible development of new kinds of weapons of mass destruction and until such time as we can develop specific recommendations by type of weapon, every three years Belarus and its partners introduce a draft resolution to the General Assembly under the title "Prohibition of the development and manufacture of new types of weapons of mass destruction and new systems of such weapons: report of the Conference on Disarmament". During the seventy-fifth session of the General Assembly, the latest such draft resolution was submitted by the delegation of Belarus and adopted by the overwhelming majority of votes. As I have already said, the resolution is of a pre-emptive, preventive nature, intended to stop the appearance of new types of weapons of mass destruction. It calls for the adoption of a response mechanism through which the Conference is requested to monitor the situation and draw up recommendations on specific negotiations on new types of weapons of mass destruction.

In today's conditions, it is impossible to ignore the growing threat of the malicious use of new achievements in science and technology by State and non-State actors, particularly in the fields of synthetic biology, autonomous weapons systems, artificial intelligence and cyberthreats. These subjects were examined in detail during the sessions of the Conference in 2019 and 2020, when we were able to take advantage of the experience of the international experts invited. The experience is there, the understanding of the issues is there; we heard different points of view on the relevance of these issues from the audience and the Conference membership. I think that we still have serious work ahead of us if we are to arrive at an

understanding of the volume of potential work and establish when we can begin and the specific subject areas for possible actions.

A while ago, during a high-level segment of the Conference, Belarus laid out and continues to support a number of proposals, which I would like to recall today and which we believe could form the basis for potential joint actions of the Conference.

For example, we propose that the Conference request the Secretary-General of the United Nations to prepare a comprehensive report on the risks and challenges that new technologies pose to international security and non-proliferation. This would provide the Conference with a much fuller picture of potentially dangerous technologies and related risks. The preparation of such a report would also be in line with the goals and actions set forth in part III of the Agenda for Disarmament of the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

Secondly, we proposed and continue to propose that the Conference review examples of the national practices adopted by various States for potential consideration of the risks and threats to international security and non-proliferation posed by new technologies. Various measures, such as the introduction of codes of conduct for scientists, have been taken at the national level. We think it is important to explore whether such measures are effective, make them part of a system and determine whether they can be made universal. The process could lead to the formulation by the Conference of a kind of compilation of rules or principles of conduct to prevent the malicious use of new scientific and technological developments.

Thirdly, we propose that the Conference begin studying and systematizing national measures to counter the attempts of non-State actors to obtain weapons of mass destruction or achieve similar ends. It is obvious to everyone in this chamber that we are all taking relevant measures at the national level. The development of harmonized principles and study of the corresponding arrangements and practices would appear to fall completely within the mandate of the Conference and could be a valuable contribution by the Conference to the work of the United Nations on counter-terrorism.

Belarus hopes that the Conference will give due consideration to agenda items 5, 6 and 7. The preventive measures that the Conference can take in response to these threats will be a major contribution to strengthening international security. Steps to improve transparency and reinforce confidence-building measures will make it possible to reduce tension and arrive at the de-escalation so eagerly awaited by many people.

In conclusion, allow me to say that Belarus stands ready to cooperate constructively to these ends with all the States members of the Conference.

The President: I thank Ambassador Ambrazevich for his pertinent and productive remarks. The first speaker on my list for the discussion today is the Ambassador of Japan.

Mr. Ogasawara (Japan): Mr. President, at the outset, I would like to thank you for holding this Conference on Disarmament plenary meeting and giving us an opportunity to exchange views on agenda item 5, new types of weapons of mass destruction and new systems of such weapons; radiological weapons. Japan highly appreciates any initiative that promotes substantive discussions in this important forum. I would also like to thank Ambassador Ambrazevich for his timely and informative presentation, which adds valuable depth and perspective to our discussions.

Japan values the work conducted by member States in subsidiary body 5 of the 2018 session of the Conference. In addition, the thematic discussions on agenda items 5, 6, and 7 at the Conference plenary meetings held in September 2020 were useful.

Regarding cybersecurity and lethal autonomous weapons systems, we are pleased that our joint efforts are prompting discussion within the relevant frameworks of the United Nations and the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons. Indeed, Japan is actively participating in these discussions. We also hope also that there will be further progress this year in the discussion regarding responsible behaviour in space.

Today, the development of science and technology, as well as their corresponding military applications, is taking place at breakneck speed. It is difficult to overstate the impact of technological innovations not only on our economies and societies but also on security issues.

Indeed, some of today's emerging technologies have been fundamentally changing military operations and may become game changers of security. At the same time, the dazzling speed of these technological advances makes it even more difficult to consider effective arms control over these technologies and their applications. These observations underline the increasing importance of dialogue, transparency and confidence-building measures between States, especially given the impact of emerging technologies on security.

In order to better prepare for future specific discussions in the Conference and to promote common understanding on these crucial matters, it is of great value to accurately understand scientific and technological progress, the current state of technological applications and the risks associated therewith. In this sense, Japan greatly appreciates today's opportunity to exchange views on these subjects.

In the field of arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation, there is a wide range of technological areas that could one day be the subject of our future discussions. Japan deems the following three points to be particularly relevant and in need of special consideration, no matter which area we may discuss.

The first point is the application of existing international law and international norms. From the perspective of Japan, a country which emphasizes always the rule of law in the international community, it is imperative to comply with international law, including international humanitarian law, especially when it comes to the use of force – this includes any new types of weapons of mass destruction. At the same time, improved transparency, strengthened confidence-building measures and better communication between countries are of great value. In this regard, I would like to reaffirm the importance of enhancing domestic implementation of international humanitarian law through, among other things, the weapons review prescribed in article 36 of Protocol I Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 1949.

The second point is the dual-use nature of technologies. In the field of space, cyberspace and artificial intelligence, many emerging technologies have both civilian and potential military applications. While emerging technologies may have significant military and security implications, the benefits of civilian use of these emerging technologies to the economy and society are also immeasurable. Therefore, it is advisable not to impose unreasonable restrictions on the development of useful technology in the name of arms control. Here, the key is learning how to strike the optimal balance between these two different requirements.

The third point is the multiplicity of stakeholders. As is clear in the artificial intelligence and digital domains, private actors are playing an increasingly significant role in technological innovations that may have major security implications. Therefore, in order to conduct a meaningful discussion, participation from multiple layers of stakeholders is even more desirable. In the same vein, input from experts from both Governments and the private sector is most welcome.

This is why General Assembly resolution 75/71 on joint courses of action and future-oriented dialogue towards a world without nuclear weapons, submitted by Japan, “encourages all States to conduct dialogue regarding the possible impacts of developments in science and technology on arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation”.

The Group of Eminent Persons for Substantive Advancement of Nuclear Disarmament, which was launched by the Government of Japan, also engaged in work on this subject. Its Chair's report, which was published in October 2019, pointed out that all States should assess how new domains and emerging technologies – including cybertechnologies, space technologies, lethal autonomous weapons and artificial intelligence – might affect strategic stability and the dangers of nuclear-weapon use, and contemplate how to mitigate or reduce the risk of disruption.

Mr. President, to conclude, let me reiterate the importance of promoting future-oriented discussion on new technologies and their impact. Japan is confident that the Conference on Disarmament is an important venue for such discussions. Japan hopes that the Conference will be able to make progress towards substantial discussions by narrowing down themes based on a common understanding among member States, while avoiding duplication with other tracks.

The President: I thank Ambassador Ogasawara of Japan. I would now like to give the floor to our next panellist in today's discussion, Ms. Liana Fix, Programme Director for International Affairs at the Körber-Stiftung in Berlin. Ms. Fix works on European security, the Russian Federation, Eastern Europe and arms control. Together with the Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy at the University of Hamburg, she initiated and led the Körber Strategic Stability Initiative. Her input will focus on recommendations developed by the Initiative to strengthen strategic stability with a special focus on new technology. Ms. Fix, you have the floor.

Ms. Fix (Körber-Stiftung): Mr. President, distinguished delegates, it is my honour and pleasure to speak today at the 2021 session of the Conference on Disarmament under the presidency of Cameroon. This plenary meeting on agenda item 5, new types of weapons of mass destruction and new systems of such weapons; radiological weapons, is of particular importance, and I am delighted to contribute on the challenges to strategic stability in the nuclear field with a focus on emerging technologies.

What I will present to you today is the result of a unique project initiated by two independent German institutions, the Körber-Stiftung in Berlin and the Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy in Hamburg. Over the course of a year, the project regularly convened a group of experts from the United States, Russia, China and Europe (France, the United Kingdom and Germany) to develop new ideas for and approaches to addressing key challenges to strategic stability in the twenty-first century.

Why strategic stability? We believe that, in contrast to what happened in the twentieth century, the new great power competition of the twenty-first century will involve more actors, more domains of competition and a technological environment that evolves with unprecedented speed. The risk of inadvertent military escalation among nuclear Powers is increasing instability. Strategic stability will not necessarily rein in competition in all spheres, but it can play a vital role in stabilizing security relationships.

We agreed on a definition of strategic stability that describes it broadly as a state of affairs that aims to minimize all types of risk of deterrence failures – the classical definition – but we also consider that strategic stability concerns not only the nuclear domain but also space, cyber- and advanced offensive and defensive conventional weapons systems. On the other hand, definitions of strategic stability vary among different experts and official communities from narrow to broad definitions. So a common definition is helpful, but most importantly, great Powers have to agree on shared concerns and to work on these concerns.

I will now present to you a selection of our recommendations with a focus on emerging technologies, including hypersonic weapons. You can find these recommendations at www.strategicstability.org.

The first recommendation is to focus on what is possible. Enhancing strategic stability between the United States, Russia and, in the long term, China will be a long, uncertain and iterative process – that is, a process where parties should be careful not to overburden any future agenda on strategic stability and not to try to create grand bargains that encompass every challenge at the same time. Creativity is necessary, but parties should jointly identify those areas that lend themselves most to cooperative approaches, while, at the same time, the United States and Russia should redouble their efforts to work on strategic stability and include hypersonic weapons on the agenda.

The second recommendation that I would like to put to the floor: there is a need to deepen exchanges and crisis communication by the five permanent members of the Security Council. One idea could be for those five countries to aim to establish hotlines and exchange notifications about planned missile launches. This would preclude misunderstandings that can have escalatory effects and enhanced predictability, including with regard to hypersonic weapons.

The next recommendation is to encourage measures to maximize decision-making time for leaders; again, of particular importance when we look at hypersonic weapons. The five permanent members of the Security Council should engage in a joint discussion on how to give national leaders as much time as possible and pursue a dialogue on maximizing decision-making times, identifying steps towards this goal – which could be supported by a

joint study on new risks associated with current postures, which also addresses double threats by emerging technologies such as hypersonic weapons. Also, these countries should accelerate a dialogue on ways to limit and reduce the risks of surprise counterforce strikes originating from nuclear and non-nuclear weapons.

I would also put to you the suggestion to clarify the risk that hypersonic weapons pose to strategic stability, a risk that is not yet entirely clear, as hypersonic weapons are still evolving. On the one hand, hypersonic weapons could strengthen second-strike capabilities, as they make it easier to maintain a level of mutual vulnerability without rough numerical parity. On the other hand, and even more important, hypersonic weapons with strategic missions can lead to various types of ambiguity – warhead ambiguity or target ambiguity – due to the better manoeuvrability of hypersonic weapons. There are also challenges to warning and decision-making time, as noted previously. To clarify these risks and challenges, a dialogue on the impact of hypersonic weapons, as a first step before we discuss applicable arms control mechanisms, is necessary.

Let me also introduce to you a suggestion for the inclusion of artificial intelligence in military weapons systems. It would be useful for States to engage in a dialogue to explain to each other, as a first step, which principles they consider acceptable when including artificial intelligence in military weapons system. This could be a first step before talks between the United States and Russia or between the United States and China, as well in multilateral formats.

Last but not least, the cyberdomain. Here, the aim should be to establish norms for cybercompetition in the nuclear domain. Regulation of cyberweapons will have to be a patchwork process. It will be long term, it will be decentralized and, possibly, frequently ad hoc. Priority should be given to mitigating threats in the nuclear domain. This is not the only area which is of concern when it comes to cyberthreats and strategic possibilities, but it is perhaps the most important and the most dangerous. As a first step, a risk hierarchy for the nuclear domain should be established where the five permanent members of the Security Council in particular can agree that cybercompetition would be too dangerous and work on establishing norms and rules of the game – for example, a code of conduct, a pledge not to conduct cyberattacks against each other's nuclear early-warning, command-and-control or communication systems.

These recommendations are an opportunity within the next five years as long as the New START remains in place and is extended until 2026. All involved should use this window of opportunity to take concrete steps to enhance strategic stability in a new era of twenty-first century challenges relating to emerging and disruptive technologies. We hope these recommendations can serve as a starting point, and we are convinced that, together, States can choose a different path and change our collective fate.

The President: I thank Ms. Liana Fix for her pertinent and productive remarks and go back now to the list of speakers. The next speaker on my list is Ambassador Robert Wood of the United States of America.

Mr. Wood (United States of America): Mr. President, I would like to thank the panellists for their informative presentations.

Over the past fifty years, we have witnessed how the Internet, and all the interconnected digital technologies that make up cyberspace, have revolutionized the way we innovate, learn, do business and express ourselves. Today, more than half the world's population is online and the Internet contributes trillions of dollars to the global economy. Our reliance on an open, interoperable, secure and reliable Internet has only intensified during the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, as customary interactions were restricted on an unprecedented level. Societies continued to function – even thrive in many cases. It exemplified why we need a safe, secure and accessible online environment.

The American vision of cyberspace reflects our democratic values and strives to be universally inclusive. The United States upholds the principle that international human rights apply online, just as they do offline. We build international cooperation to address shared challenges like malicious cyberactivities by adversaries, cybercrime across borders and malign influence in politics. The United States fosters an inclusive, multi-stakeholder

approach to governing the Internet that prioritizes openness and innovation, working with the private sector and civil society.

Threats enabled by cyberactivities have proliferated as our systems become increasingly interconnected. These threats range from State-sponsored attempts to target major critical infrastructure to the use of ransomware by cybercriminals to extort a single individual or hold hostage sensitive information.

Certainly, the ransomware threat is an urgent, complex national security matter that has been on the rise for years. Ransomware incidents have recently targeted our gasoline pipelines and meat supply chain. And such incidents are happening not just in America but around the world. Combating ransomware is a top priority for our Administration, but we cannot confront this threat alone, which is why working with our international partners and the private sector will be key.

We have also delivered the message that responsible States do not harbour ransomware criminals and have called on States to take decisive action against these ransomware networks. We will work with allies and partners on resiliency and to hold accountable nations that provide safe harbour to criminal ransomware actors.

We have also seen how authoritarian States have manipulated this space to suppress dissent and monitor populations in an effort to maintain ideological control. We, the international community, must push back hard against States that seek to exploit and undermine the open nature of cyberspace.

The United States relies on strong international partnerships, as embodied in the global framework of the United Nations for advancing responsible State behaviour in cyberspace that preserves peace and reduces the risk of conflict. For more than a decade, the United States has worked under the auspices of the First Committee with partners around the world to design and promote that United Nations framework, which has three key elements: first, it affirms that existing international law applies to State behaviour in cyberspace; second, it calls on all States to adhere to 11 voluntary, non-binding norms of behaviour in cyberspace during peacetime; and third, it calls for the development and implementation of practical confidence-building measures to reduce the risk of conflict in cyberspace.

Over the years, we have achieved consensus in the United Nations for advancing this framework in multiple forums. All United Nations Member States affirmed this framework in their adoption of the 2013 and 2015 consensus reports of the United Nations Group of Governmental Experts and most recently in the consensus report of the 2019–2021 Group. The recent consensus affirmed the applicability of international humanitarian law in the context of States' use of information and communications technology in armed conflict and provided additional guidance on the norms so States have a better understanding of how they apply.

It is also worth noting the successful consensus reached by the Open-ended Working Group on Developments in the Field of Information and Telecommunications in the Context of International Security. The meetings of the Open-ended Working Group were the first time a United Nations negotiation on cybersystems was open to all 193 Member States; the international community stood together in endorsing the framework we worked hard to champion.

Do not be misled into thinking there are no norms or rules in cyberspace. There are important legal rules and politically imperative norms on State behaviour in cyberspace that have been adopted by the international community, and they exist because the United States worked with our partners and adversaries alike for many years to forge consensus on what they should be.

On cybertechnology issues, the United States is forging the strong international partnerships that will protect global security and prosperity. We are doing so bilaterally with our treaty allies and other partners. We are doing so in regional organizations like the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the Organization of American States. And we are doing so in multilateral organizations like the Conference on Disarmament and the United Nations.

In each of these forums, we advocate for the framework of responsible State behaviour in cyberspace that remains the best path forward for stability and security in cyberspace.

The President: I thank Ambassador Robert Wood of the United States of America for his statement. The next speaker on my list is Ambassador Jan Gabriëlse of the Netherlands.

Mr. Gabriëlse (Netherlands): Mr. President, my delegation would like to thank you for organizing a thematic debate on the Conference's agenda item 5. This topic, new types of weapons of mass destruction and new systems of such weapons, continues to evolve, as we witness the development of new and established technologies and their military applications. My country, the Netherlands, follows these developments closely and with sustained interest. It is therefore key that the Conference remain abreast of this topic. Allow me to thank the panellists for their comprehensive and interesting introductions.

Technologies such as digital and cybersecurity technologies, artificial intelligence, unmanned aerial vehicles and lethal autonomous weapons systems are relevant to this discussion, and I would therefore like to elaborate on these emerging or new technologies. New technologies potentially add to instability and risk because of their entanglement with the nuclear domain. That counts for hypersonic systems in relation to means of delivery but also for artificial intelligence and cyber technology in relation to command-and-control systems. As a result, emerging technologies have become more of a priority for the Netherlands. There is a great analogy between nuclear and emerging technologies: in both cases, we aim to prevent a conflict with major consequences. Together, we must work on describing responsible and irresponsible behaviour, transparency and building trust.

I would like to emphasize the importance of risk reduction, crisis stability and crisis management. Risk reduction has traditionally taken place in the nuclear domain but can be extended to the field of emerging technologies. It can form the basis for concrete actions in the area of emerging technologies, such as improving communication channels, promoting transparency and increasing understanding and dialogue about doctrines.

Concerning cybersecurity, we continue to see that both State and non-State actors are increasingly active in the cyber technology domain. Cyberoperations can be conceived as attractive because of the large potential impact that can be realized through relatively limited resources. The use of offensive cyber capability can have a destabilizing effect on international relations. The open, free, secure and stable character of the Internet can be negatively affected by the potential proliferation of cyber capabilities, which in turn may have detrimental consequences for economic opportunities arising from increased digitization. With the recent consensus reached on the framework of responsible behaviour in cyberspace via the reports of both the Open-ended Working Group on Developments in the Field of Information and Telecommunications in the Context of International Security and the Group of Governmental Experts, we may be able to better respond to the aforementioned risks. These reports give us a better understanding of agreed voluntary non-binding norms, of the applicability of international law to cyberspace and of confidence-building measures and capacity-building. Continuing efforts on the implementation of the agreed framework are needed to reduce the risks of escalation.

Artificial intelligence, in all its forms and facets, is already profoundly influencing human civilization and will further change the role of, and relation between, human and machine. The overarching risk-related question is still: how can humans continue to exercise meaningful human control over advanced systems with artificial intelligence? A thorough debate, in greater depth, about meaningful human control continues to be necessary in all domains where artificial intelligence is applied. That debate, and the forthcoming solutions, should not be limited to the operational phase of artificial intelligence systems but should incorporate the design, development and testing phases. One of the important follow-on questions surrounding the development of new technologies is whether our current legal framework suffices to address any challenges arising from new technologies, such as the deployment of artificial intelligence in armed conflicts or the fading distinction between dual-use and military goods and the potential impact this has on our export control regimes.

In November 2020, the Netherlands organized an expert meeting with international legal experts to seek potential gaps within our regulatory frameworks. The conclusion of the experts was that current international law fully applies to new technologies, including

artificial intelligence, and that for now no new legal rules are necessary, although potential reinterpretation of existing norms will be something to study continuously. The Netherlands has a rich tradition when it comes to feeding the legal debate on matters relating to non-proliferation, disarmament and weapons export control and is fully committed to continuing to do so in our joint effort to keep pace with the fast development of new technologies such as artificial intelligence.

With regard to autonomous weapons systems, the Group of Governmental Experts on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems has taken steps on the issue of these systems. The Netherlands was a supporter of the establishment of the Group from the beginning and is pleased with the development of the guiding principles for the development and use of lethal autonomous weapons systems. Unfortunately, the restrictions put in place due to the COVID-19 pandemic have made it challenging to make further progress on this important matter. Nonetheless, the Netherlands remains fully committed to continuing work on such weapons systems in the context of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and is confident that with the combined legal, military and technological expertise, more clarity can be given to existing regulatory frameworks.

As set forth by the Belgian Chair of the Group of Governmental Experts, the Netherlands believes it is important that the Group put forward concrete recommendations in relation to the clarification, consideration and development of aspects of the normative and operational framework on emerging technologies in the area of lethal autonomous weapons systems to the High Contracting Parties to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons in the run-up to their sixth review conference. The recommendations should, as a minimum, address the application of international humanitarian law, human responsibility, human/machine interaction and, lastly, weapons reviews.

A crucial element for the Netherlands is that humans should always retain meaningful human control over autonomous weapons systems. In that regard, the Netherlands is pleased to announce that a new study by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute and the International Committee of the Red Cross on identifying limits and the required type and degree of human-machine interaction, which was co-sponsored by the Netherlands, will be presented on 29 June. We hope that these useful findings will stimulate the debate and help us to reach further consensus on this important work area in the run-up to the Review Conference of the High Contracting Parties to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons.

The rise of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) in the past decade has been extraordinary. A large variety of systems is now being used in an equally varied number of applications, ranging from lightweight drones for recreational use to sophisticated armed unmanned aerial vehicles for defensive and offensive purposes. These developments will continue, enabled by new technologies such as advanced materials and artificial intelligence. The downside of this development, however, is the introduction of new threats and risks that will have an impact on international security. Important issues in this respect include the role of UAVs in and outside armed conflict, the proliferation of UAV technology and the increasing level of autonomy of UAVs. The Netherlands is committed to engaging in international dialogue and initiatives to address these challenges, including by seeking to achieve effective international agreements, as part of our overall commitment to arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation.

Lastly, regarding biosecurity, the Netherlands is supporting the strengthening of the Biological Weapons Convention. Through capacity-building initiatives, peer reviews and awareness-raising campaigns, we aim to increase biosecurity and biosafety worldwide. Biotechnological advances provide opportunities, such as the development of cures for dangerous diseases, but also pose serious threats: biological weapons are becoming increasingly easy to develop in labs. New measures, regulations and guidelines are required in order to prevent malicious actors from gaining access to sensitive research, knowledge or data that would enable them to develop such a biological weapon.

The President: I thank Ambassador Jan Gabriëlse of the Netherlands. The next speaker on my list is Ambassador Pankaj Sharma of India.

Mr. Sharma (India): Mr. President, let me start by welcoming Ambassador Stuart Harold Comberbach of Zimbabwe, also a State member of the Group of 21, to our Conference on Disarmament family and assure him of my delegation's support and cooperation. I look forward to working with him and his delegation. I would like to thank Ambassador Yury Ambrazevich and Ms. Liana Fix, the panellists, for their excellent presentations and for laying the ground for today's discussions.

The international community is acutely conscious of the grave danger posed by weapons of mass destruction to international peace and security. India fully shares this concern and takes all necessary steps to address it.

India has been drawing global attention to the threat posed by terrorists acquiring weapons of mass destruction through a General Assembly resolution, presented every year since 2002, entitled "Measures to prevent terrorists from acquiring weapons of mass destruction". The resolution is adopted by the General Assembly without a vote and with a large number of Member States co-sponsoring the resolution. India also supports the General Assembly resolution on preventing the acquisition by terrorists of radioactive materials and sources.

Rapid developments in science and technology have a significant bearing on our work. Mindful of this important aspect, India has been tabling a resolution in the General Assembly on the role of science and technology in the context of international security and disarmament, which was adopted by consensus. The Secretary-General's reports in response to this resolution have provided useful pointers, which need to be considered by the international community in order to avoid risks posed by the emerging technologies, while ensuring and promoting peaceful applications of such technologies.

The issue of radiological weapons has been on the agenda of the Conference since 1979, following the General Assembly's call in 1978 to conclude a convention prohibiting the development, production, stockpiling and use of radiological weapons. The issue was considered in ad hoc working groups from 1980 to 1983 and in ad hoc committees between 1984 and 1992. In recent years, it has been part of discussions in the informal and formal meetings in the Conference on Disarmament.

The international community has taken several important measures to protect and secure nuclear and radiological materials. These include the adoption of the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism, the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material and Nuclear Facilities and the Code of Conduct on the Safety and Security of Radioactive Sources. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has taken various steps to improve the regulatory framework for nuclear security. Security Council resolution 1540 (2004), the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism and Nuclear Security Summits have also played an important role in this context.

While India attaches the highest priority to nuclear disarmament, India would not stand in the way of commencing substantive negotiations in the Conference with a view to achieving one or more legally binding international instruments that would address the threat posed by new types of weapons of mass destruction, including radiological weapons, should there be a consensus in the Conference in this regard. The Conference should specifically focus on radiological weapons without duplicating the work being conducted at IAEA or other international forums and avoid any redundancies. This could be in the form of a convention containing legal obligations to prevent States from developing, deploying or using such weapons.

India attaches high importance to the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological Weapons Convention as examples of non-discriminatory and multilaterally negotiated treaties in the field of disarmament for the total elimination of specific types of weapons of mass destruction. The success of these conventions, particularly the Chemical Weapons Convention, with a non-discriminatory verification regime, can serve as a model for the future elimination of nuclear weapons.

The President: I thank Ambassador Pankaj Sharma of India. The next speaker on my list is Mr. Wu Chengmai, representative of China.

Mr. Wu Chengmai (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): Mr. President, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the two speakers for their comprehensive and in-depth presentations.

New types of weapons of mass destruction are a traditional topic of discussion in the Conference on Disarmament. At present, the need for the Conference to conduct in-depth discussions on this topic and the importance and urgency that it should do so have never been more evident. The emergence and development of new types of weapons of mass destruction are driven by scientific and technological progress, and are also the product of changes in the international security landscape. On the one hand, space technology, cyber technology, artificial intelligence, biotechnology and other new technologies are advancing rapidly, greatly promoting economic prosperity, social progress and human well-being and profoundly changing the conditions of human existence. On the other hand, the double-edged-sword nature of the new technologies is also becoming increasingly evident, and related technologies are being applied in the military field on a larger scale and at a faster pace.

In particular, individual superpowers are actively pursuing the development of anti-missile and outer space strategies and related weapons systems, and taking the lead in developing new concepts of strategic weapons systems represented by the Prompt Global Strike system, posing a series of new challenges to global strategic security and stability and confronting the international peace and security and arms control and disarmament process with new issues. Individual countries are pursuing hegemony in outer space, accelerating the integration of outer space anti-missile capabilities and loudly boasting that they will deploy related weapons in outer space, which will further intensify the trend of weaponizing outer space and making it into a battlefield.

The difficulty of tracing the origins of cyberattacks and uncovering those responsible for them can easily lead to misunderstandings and miscalculations between countries, and could even spark conflicts. The development of such new strategic weaponry as hypersonic weapons poses new uncertainties for global strategic balance and stability. The military application of artificial intelligence technology is increasingly raising anxiety about machines controlling humans. Biotechnology, once misused and abused, will not only raise ethical, moral, environmental and ecological concerns, but could even put the survival of humanity at risk.

The brash attempt by individual countries to decouple science and technology, launch a new Cold War in the field of science and technology, and weaponize the supply chain will not only add to the struggle of the international arms control and disarmament process, but will also have an incalculably serious impact on the sustainable development of the global economy and society.

How to discuss and deal with the aforementioned strategic security issues is a completely new topic, one on which the international community has yet to reach a definitive conclusion. Given the background of the issues involved, it is also impossible for the international community to treat them as a simple and isolated arms control matter; they must be viewed and dealt with from within the framework of global strategic balance, stability and security.

China initially believes that an appropriate starting point for studying new types of weapons of mass destruction would be at the level of basic concepts, technical characteristics and development trends, and within different multilateral, multinational and bilateral frameworks. Practical and feasible arms control policy options should be gradually explored on this basis, and premised on the maintenance of the global strategic balance, stability and security.

In this process, it is necessary to abide by the following basic principles. First, the security environment, legitimate national security needs and fundamental defence policies of all countries should be taken into account. Second, the security concerns of all countries should be treated equally, to ensure that the security of no country is compromised. Third, the dual-use nature of the technologies concerned should be recognized; the right of all countries to use those technologies for peaceful purposes cannot be restricted, and even less can high-tech barriers to their use be erected.

China advocates that the Conference on Disarmament, as the sole multilateral negotiating body on disarmament, should keep pace with the times, pay attention to the dynamics of the issue of new types of weapons of mass destruction and their impact on international strategic security and stability, and involve itself in work in this regard. While promoting an appropriate response by the international community to those new challenges, this will also provide a new opportunity for the Conference to break its deadlock.

Mr. President, China unswervingly follows the path of peaceful development, firmly supports multilateralism and is firmly committed to the international arms control and disarmament process. China has always pursued a defensive national defence policy. Based on this policy, the common goal of Chinese military development in all areas is to meet the legitimate need to safeguard national sovereignty, security and territorial integrity; these are all integral parts of a defensive national defence strategic plan; and they are all bound by the defensive overall policy of national defence, a policy which will not be changed.

China does not have the same strategic goals and plans for global warfare as other countries, and has no intention of engaging in an arms race with any country in any field. China stands ready to work with all parties to explore and study the proper handling and resolution of the issue of new types of weapons of mass destruction, and will continue to play an active role in maintaining global strategic balance and stability, as well as international peace and security.

The President: I thank Mr. Wu Chengmai, representative of China. I give the floor to the representative of the Republic of Korea, Ms. Choi Soonhee.

Ms. Choi Soonhee (Republic of Korea): Mr. President, my delegation considers today's periodic discussion on agenda item 5 as a welcome opportunity to identify, strengthen and build on common ground on key issues we face. Today's topic is, by definition, a matter that is, to some degree, unknown territory, and I would like to sincerely thank all the panellists for their informative and interesting presentations this morning.

There are growing concerns over the impact of emerging technologies in the field of international peace and security, especially regarding the behaviour of State and non-State actors in cyberspace, combined with tremendous developments in artificial intelligence, autonomous technologies and convergent services through the Internet of things have further complicated the international security landscape.

As a matter of principle, we firmly believe all States need to work together through responsible behaviours in developing and using new technologies in a transparent and safe manner. We are also of the view that the current system of international law, including the Charter of the United Nations, is applicable to the information and communications technology (ICT) environment. While we do not believe it is a realistic option, at this stage, to produce legally binding norms in the field of ICT and cyberspace in the context of international security, we believe that the ongoing international collective efforts in this regard will serve to nurture the sense of trust and confidence among those who have a range of views and perspectives. In particular, we take note of the recent progress in common efforts at the international level to address the issue of cybersecurity. We welcome the recent consensus report of the Group of Governmental Experts on Advancing Responsible State Behaviour in Cyberspace in the Context of International Security.

With regard to the Open-ended Working Group on Security of and in the Use of Information and Communications Technologies, recently launched pursuant to General Assembly resolution 75/240, we would like to reaffirm our position that the previous reports of the Open-ended Working Group and the Group of Governmental Experts should be the basis of the discussions in this new phase. We believe that the programme of action which was initiated by the joint efforts of France and Egypt will also have a valuable part to play.

My delegation fully recognizes and shares the growing concerns over the weaponization of artificial intelligence. In this regard, we believe that the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, which strikes a balance between humanitarian considerations and security concerns, is an appropriate framework for dealing with the issue of emerging technologies in the area of legal autonomous weapons systems. Since its formal launch in 2017, the work of the Group of Governmental Experts on Emerging Technologies

in the Area of Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems has, within the framework of the Convention, proved fruitful in that, after several years of intense discussions, 11 guiding principles have been identified and endorsed by consensus.

While the discussions on lethal autonomous weapons systems in the Group of Governmental Experts have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, my delegation hopes that they will soon resume in order to elaborate consensus recommendations in relation to the clarification, consideration and development aspects of the normative and operational framework of such weapons systems. In this regard, we take note of the recent efforts by other State and non-State actors to deepen our understanding on key factors and elements with regard to lethal autonomous weapons systems and gain a clear picture of our future direction for discussions under the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons.

The President: I thank Ms. Choi Soonhee of the Republic of Korea for her statement. I give the floor to the representative of Pakistan.

Mr. Omar (Pakistan): Thank you, Mr. President. I will be delivering our statement on behalf of Ambassador Hashmi.

Mr. President, thank you for convening this meeting. We also thank the panellists for their valuable presentations. The item under discussion today – that is, new types of weapons of mass destruction and new systems of such weapon; radiological weapons – has been on the Conference on Disarmament's agenda for over four decades. The topics that formed the roots of this item back in the 1960s and 1970s included the General Assembly discussions on the military applications of laser technology and radiological warfare. It was also established that, as technology evolved, further issues would have to be examined under this item.

This aspect was also recognized in extensive detail in the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, which states:

In order to help prevent a qualitative arms race and so that scientific and technological achievements may ultimately be used solely for peaceful purposes, effective measures should be taken to avoid the danger and prevent the emergence of new types of weapons of mass destruction based on new scientific principles and achievements. Efforts should be appropriately pursued aiming at the prohibition of such new types and new systems of weapons of mass destruction. Specific arrangements could be concluded on particular types of new weapons of mass destruction which may be identified. This question should be kept under continuing review.

The Final Document also underscored that a convention should be concluded prohibiting the development, production, stockpiling and use of radiological weapons.

In the 1980s, in what is now a familiar theme, a subsidiary body on the radiological weapons considered the matter, but no consensus emerged; and from 1993 to 2018, no subsidiary body was re-established on this item.

As we saw with other items, the treatment of this agenda item at the Conference has also not been much different and any meaningful progress in this body, let alone the negotiation and conclusion of a legal instrument, remains elusive.

The world has changed much since the 1960s and 1970s. Yet some foundational principles have shown themselves to transcend the vagaries of time. We have witnessed a reaffirmation and strengthening of the links between technology, innovation and weapons systems. In fact, the unprecedented and breakneck pace of the development and emergence of new technologies has only highlighted the need, which is greater than ever, to apply an arms control lens.

This heightened pace of technological innovations has persisted and continues to change the way international law can and should govern the development, deployment and use of these weapons. Even as the pace of developments in the use of new weapons technologies remains inevitable, it is essential to develop commensurate norms, laws and rules to regulate them in all their dimensions.

The way some of these new and emerging technologies are being used has a direct bearing on international as well as regional peace and security at all levels. It is not surprising, therefore, that this item has assumed higher significance over the past years and is indeed emerging as the fifth core issue in the Conference.

We continue to witness an innovation overflow in various categories of new technologies and arms that is outpacing requisite regulations and control. Even as we grapple with questions surrounding new domains of warfare, such as cyberspace, outer space and the electromagnetic spectrum, added layers of complexity arise due to the integration of technology with traditional domains, whether on land, in the air or at sea. As a further enabler, technology has integrated all domains, to one degree or another, making warfare a cross-domain construct. Nor can our arms control and disarmament solutions remain oblivious to such developments or remain stuck in old binaries, as they no longer provide all the answers. This growing gap between innovation, integration and regulation creates and accentuates vulnerabilities and drivers of tensions for States, generating an increasingly destabilizing vacuum.

While we justifiably focus on the impact of weapons of mass destruction, especially nuclear weapons, on international security, it is important to recognize that the collective impact of and serious threats to peace, security and stability at regional and global levels by such developments are comparable to any other category of weapon of mass destruction. This aspect has been well established, as evidenced in the security policies and doctrines of States, some of which make explicit links between new weapons and nuclear weapons, while others make implicit links.

An added element of such weapons, which makes a compelling case for urgent consideration by this body, is that these new weapons reduce or eliminate the danger of human casualties for the user States and therefore increase the propensity for their use and enhance the prospects of symmetric and asymmetric responses. The net result is a lowering of the threshold for resorting to armed conflict.

Within this larger edifice of new and emerging technologies, I would draw attention to three particular issues that merit an earnest discussion and consideration by the Conference – namely, cyberweapons, lethal autonomous weapons systems and the issue of chemical and biological terrorism.

Cyberspace has emerged as one of the key domains of modern warfare. The ability to act anonymously without traditional geographical limitations at a very low risk to human life, coupled with the ability to mass produce cyberweapons cheaply, makes cyberweapons extremely attractive and yet dangerous. Several States have developed or are developing information and communications technologies as instruments of warfare and intelligence operations and for political purposes. The spread of sophisticated malicious tools and techniques by States or non-State actors further increases the risk of mistaken attribution and unintended escalation.

As destructive activities using cyberweapons grow riskier and more complex, it is obvious that no State is able to address these threats alone. A multilateral response, including international cooperation and assistance, is therefore essential if risks are to be reduced and cyberspace is to be secured. Given the unique attributes of information and communication technologies, additional norms should be developed over time.

A significant number of States rightly describe lethal autonomous weapons systems as the next revolution in military affairs, fundamentally changing the nature of war. This class of weapon is not something out of science fiction, as some may suggest, but a priority concern for many States. As a unique and novel class of weapons that has given rise to multifaceted concerns, this category of weapon needs to be regulated multilaterally.

In addition to the legal and humanitarian dimensions, these weapons systems have serious implications for regional as well as global peace and security. Among other aspects, their introduction will significantly lower the threshold of war. Consequently, the use of force will become more frequent. Lethal autonomous weapons systems will therefore undermine peace and security at the regional, subregional and global levels. Their introduction would

also affect progress on disarmament and non-proliferation, as more and more States start linking these capabilities with strategic stability and other disarmament questions.

Besides the issue of these weapons systems being considered within the framework of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, their international security dimensions should be comprehensively addressed by the Conference on Disarmament.

The Biological Weapons Convention and the Chemical Weapons Convention are two important pillars of the international security architecture. We value the contributions by both conventions to global security and their potential for promoting international cooperation in peaceful uses within their respective areas. However, significant gaps exist, which are being further accentuated with the emergence of new technologies. For the Biological Weapons Conventions, the questions generated by the lack of a dedicated verification mechanism are only going to be compounded with continued advances in technology, including those related to synthetic biology and nano biomaterials.

It is well known that chemical and biological materials are more easily available than in the past and that there are therefore greater risks of their being acquired, developed and used by non-State actors. While nuclear terrorism is already covered under existing international instruments, a convention dealing with terrorist acts involving chemical and biological materials will be a positive development in the international security and counter-terrorism landscape.

We support the commencement of substantive work in the Conference on elaborating an international convention on the suppression of acts of chemical and biological terrorism, whether in the form of discussions or of negotiations. As a proposal that does not negatively affect the vital security interests of any member State, it would avoid the issues arising from competing priorities among the Conference's four other so-called core issues. Other new types of weapons, such as directed-energy weapons, are also in need of a similar focus. Addressing these issues is increasingly not a matter of choice as the impacts of these weapons systems on international security will only continue to grow.

Mr. President, the Conference cannot remain oblivious to these ongoing developments and must deliberate and prepare the ground to tackle them in such a manner as to provide enhanced security for all States. It has all the requisite tools to address them. As we have pointed out in other thematic discussions in the Conference this year, States seeking to perpetuate perceived strategic advantages and maintain their full-spectrum dominance have continued to avoid taking up these issues in an earnest manner, as is the case with other so-called core issues. Such an approach only perpetuates the deadlock in the Conference and needs revisiting sooner rather than later.

The President: I thank the representative of Pakistan and now give the floor to the representative of Argentina, Ms. Estefanía Porta.

Ms. Porta (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President, my delegation believes that weapons of mass destruction are one of the main threats to world stability, and that is why Argentina reiterates its support for any measure that promotes the total elimination of this type of weapon and associated systems.

Argentina has traditionally been strongly committed to the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and to the sovereign right to national development of the strictly peaceful uses of the technologies. In this regard, we would like to emphasize that Argentina has made significant advances in developing peaceful uses of these technologies and, in compliance with its international commitments and as a responsible actor in the international community, has implemented national and international measures to guarantee the security of materials that could be used for the construction of weapons of mass destruction.

Indeed, Argentina's commitment to non-proliferation is reflected in its national legislation, which incorporates the main international instruments in this area, as well as in its regular submission of the relevant national reports. In that regard, we would like to stress that a significant step, albeit not the only one, towards achieving the goal of disarmament and non-proliferation would be to comply with the obligations imposed by Security Council resolution 1540 (2004).

Mr. President, nuclear and radiological terrorism represents a real and feasible threat that requires the due attention of the international community and joint efforts to increase the security and physical protection of nuclear materials and radioactive sources on a global scale. In this regard, Argentina believes that the construction of a robust international regime to mitigate the risks associated with access by non-State actors to weapons of mass destruction of this kind, especially radiological dispersal weapons or devices, is of the utmost importance in enhancing international security and helping to guarantee the exclusively peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

It was in this context that Argentina ratified the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism in April 2016. Article 1 of that Convention defines radioactive material and radiation-emitting devices, and article 2 defines the criminal offences associated with the improper possession and use of radioactive material.

At the domestic level, article 189 bis of the Argentine Criminal Code defines and penalizes the offences associated with the improper use of these materials. Furthermore, the use of radioactive materials in Argentina, including nuclear materials which, because of their composition, could be used to make a nuclear weapon, is subject to the provisions of the National Act on Nuclear Activity, enacted in 1997 and to regulation and oversight by the Argentine nuclear regulatory authority. My delegation would like to add that Argentina takes part in the various activities related to nuclear and radioactive source security in the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), which it recognizes as the main coordinating body in this area.

With regard to the physical security of radioactive sources, Argentina has expressed its political commitment to the non-binding IAEA Code of Conduct on the Safety and Security of Radioactive Sources and its intention to be guided by its complementary instruments.

Argentina also participates as a designated focal point of the IAEA database on incidents and illicit trafficking, through which incidents of illicit trafficking and other unauthorized activities and events involving nuclear and other radioactive materials not under regulatory control are recorded and reported to Member States. Furthermore, Argentina applies all multilateral export control regimes and has been part of the Proliferation Security Initiative since 2005, attending high-level meetings, meetings of the Group of Experts and various workshops and exercises. It has also been part of the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism since 2010, when it acceded to its charter of principles. It currently chairs the working group on mitigation and response and hosted the last Global Initiative plenary meeting, in June 2019.

At the same time, Argentina was a member of the group of countries that participated in the nuclear security summit process between 2010 and 2016, and is currently a member of the Nuclear Security Contact Group, the successor mechanism to that process.

Mr. President, the central objective of the nuclear security summits was to raise awareness at the highest level of the threats posed by nuclear and radiological terrorism, and accordingly to generate measures and policies to increase the physical security of nuclear and radioactive materials, thus preventing their potential diversion to terrorist activities.

Mr. President, my delegation believes that all the initiatives that have been taken strengthen the international community's capacity to respond to the risk of radioactive sources being diverted to the illicit market or used by non-State groups, and recognizes, first and foremost, the fundamental role of IAEA in this regard. Nevertheless, we believe that the Conference on Disarmament should pursue, and deepen, its debate on radiological norms, on radiological weapons and on the risk posed by new weapons of mass destruction and the role of the development of new technologies in the development of such weapons. In that regard, my delegation advocates the negotiation of a legally binding instrument on lethal autonomous weapons systems within the framework of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, bearing in mind that any measures to impose limits on the development and use of technologies in autonomous weapons systems should not undermine the development of, or the possibilities available to States to develop, similar technologies for peaceful purposes and uses at the national level.

The President: I thank the representative of Argentina. The next speaker on my list is the representative of France. I give the floor to Ms. Amélie Delaroche.

Ms. Delaroche (France) (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, I would first of all like to thank the speakers for their presentations.

Progress in science and technology can contribute to making the world safer and more secure. Artificial intelligence could soon make it possible to clear landmines from conflict zones without endangering human lives. Drones will help keep peacekeepers safe on the ground. Materials technology makes it possible to mark, trace and secure small arms and light weapons, which is essential for eliminating illicit trafficking. As we can see from these few examples, these technologies can provide significant advantages for peace and security.

However, we must also make a clear-sighted assessment of the risks. Cyberspace and outer space are now becoming arenas of strategic rivalry or even potential combat arenas in their own right. The growing digitization of societies increases their vulnerability. The manipulation of information, which is a practice contrary to democratic values, is amplified by hyperconnectivity and artificial intelligence. The development of artificial intelligence, autonomy and robotics is raising issues about the weapons systems of tomorrow. Essentially, some developments could call into question the legal, humanitarian and ethical standards we currently apply.

It is vital to recall that the development of these technologies by States or private actors must go along with respect for human rights and international law, including international humanitarian law. France defends clear principles in these matters: the full applicability of international law in cyberspace and outer space, monitoring and a clear chain of command and control in the use of weapons, the maintaining of adequate human control over cutting-edge innovations and the involvement of civil society and private actors.

We must not fear technology but neither should we let it develop without constraints or controls. Here I would like to mention the original and unprecedented initiative taken by the French Minister for the Armed Forces last year: France has established a standing committee on ethics, responsible for considering the ethical issues raised by technological innovations in the area of defence. This committee recently published an opinion on the integration of autonomy in lethal weapons systems, which we hope will inform the work of the Group of Governmental Experts on Emerging Technologies in the Area of Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems under the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons.

In the context of a deteriorating international security environment, we have a responsibility to regulate the development of these emerging technologies in the relevant forums. We must also determine how to strengthen international cooperation with those countries that most need it, to facilitate access to new and emerging technologies for peaceful ends. Only strong multilateralism can help us in that venture.

The increasing number of cyberattacks in recent years is a reminder of the extent to which cybersecurity is a major challenge for our Governments, which must respond through cooperation and legal means. As we stated in the Paris Call for Trust and Security in Cyberspace and the Dinard Declaration on the Cyber Norm Initiative, France is committed to promoting an open, secure, stable, accessible and peaceful cyberspace. In this regard, we note that existing international law, including the entire Charter of the United Nations, applies to cyberspace.

France has actively participated in the various United Nations working groups on cybersecurity. This multilateral work has helped bring about a framework for responsible State behaviour, reaffirming the applicability of international law in cyberspace, setting out standards of conduct and promoting transparency and confidence-building measures.

France welcomes the recent success of the open-ended working group established on the basis of General Assembly resolution 73/27, which adopted a consensus report in March, and the work of the Group of Governmental Experts established pursuant to General Assembly resolution 73/266, which agreed on a final substantive report at the end of May.

France hopes that the constructive spirit which reigned during the work of the open-ended working group and the Group of Governmental Experts will continue and allow

discussions at the United Nations to keep moving forward to guarantee the security and stability of cyberspace. France is ready to participate in the work of the new open-ended working group established pursuant to General Assembly resolution 75/240, to build on the achievements of the previous groups. Moreover, France considers that it is now time to work on improving the practical application of these achievements, especially through increased support for capacity-building. To this end, France, along with 52 other countries, is promoting the launch of a United Nations programme of action on cybersecurity.

In the field of biology, technological innovations are leading to new challenges that must be taken into account. The rapid progress in biotechnology is posing risks to the international community equal to the benefits it can also bring.

In this regard, the Biological Weapons Convention is the dedicated and almost universal international legal framework for the prevention of human-induced biological risk. It also provides for the development of international cooperation in the biological sciences for peaceful purposes. Although the Convention was adopted in 1972, at a time when many of today's biotechnologies did not exist, the instrument expressly prohibits the hostile use of biological agents and their vectors, whatever their origin or method of production.

The global challenge of technological developments in biology could usefully be dealt with under the Convention, both through ad hoc follow-up during meetings of experts and through statements that any hostile use of biotechnologies is covered and therefore prohibited under the Convention.

The President: I thank the representative of France. The next speaker on my list is the representative of Turkey, Mr. Ali Sezgin Işılak.

Mr. Işılak (Turkey): We would like to thank you, Mr. President, for arranging very successful thematic debates on the agenda items. We hope that the results of the meetings will help the Conference on Disarmament to overcome the ongoing deadlock. I would also like to thank Ambassador Ambrazevich and Ms. Fix for their presentations.

We have to address the impact of today's sweeping and rapid technological change on disarmament. Artificial intelligence, ubiquitous sensors, advanced manufacturing and quantum science are transforming modern warfare. First, we should determine what kind of weapons we should take into consideration in the future negotiations. We need to reflect on the risks, challenges and threats of those technologies to our security. New technologies can easily fall into the hands of non-State actors, particularly terrorist groups, and pose a challenge to international peace and security.

Existing multilateral instruments such as the Non-Proliferation Treaty, the Biological Weapons Convention and the Chemical Weapons Convention should be updated to ensure that they are not made obsolete by developments in science and technology. International and regional cooperation, transparency, capacity-building, assistance for those in need and accountability for misuse of emerging technologies are crucial.

We attach the utmost importance to the ethical and legal use of new technologies with military applications. We believe that humans should bear the ultimate responsibility when dealing with matters of life and death in a significant and meaningful manner.

The President: I thank the representative of Turkey. The next speaker on my list the representative of the Russian Federation, Ms. Olga Kuznetsova.

Ms. Kuznetsova (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Mr. President, distinguished colleagues, we fully agree with the opinion of Ambassador Ambrazevich on the relevance of addressing the issue of new types of weapons of mass destruction at the Conference on Disarmament. It is only in this multilateral forum, which is a unique forum for professional and unbiased discussion of international security issues, that it is possible to have a comprehensive exchange of views on this topic, share our concerns in this regard and, if necessary, initiate a negotiation process with a view to monitoring or banning any new types of weapons of mass destruction.

The topic of new types of such weapons remains important and deserves close attention from the international community. The rapid and sometimes uncontrolled development of advanced technologies, which not only makes it possible to design new, more

efficient weapons systems, but also makes such development more easily accessible, including to non-State actors, has lent particular urgency to this topic. Given the complicated state of the international security architecture today, the emergence of new types of weapons of mass destruction threatens to create an even greater imbalance and may trigger a new spiralling of the arms race in this area with extremely unpredictable consequences. This underscores the need to closely monitor scientific and technological developments that could be used to create new types of weapons comparable or superior in their destructive capabilities to types of weapons of mass destruction already known.

The international community must be able to respond in a timely manner to threats that raise concerns and take the necessary effective measures to prevent the emergence of new types of weapons of mass destruction. We believe that our Conference can make a significant contribution to preventing those threats. That will, require first and foremost, focussing on an in-depth expert analysis of the issue.

However, as shown by today's discussion and the aspects it touched upon, the issue of new types of weapons of mass destruction is of a complex and even interdisciplinary nature. For example, it might entail creating the conditions for establishing specific criteria for determining the types of such new weapons. It goes without saying that discussions on these topics should fully comply with the agenda and mandate of the Conference.

In this regard, we would like to emphasize that some of the topics already covered under this heading, such as the use of artificial intelligence technologies in military affairs, lethal autonomous weapons systems and cybersecurity issues, are already being discussed in an extensive and very productive manner, including here in Geneva. There are specialized frameworks for such discussion, such as the Group of Governmental Experts on Emerging Technologies in the Area of Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems under the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and the Group of Governmental Experts and the Open-ended Working Group on international information security, among others. Thus, we do not see any compelling reason to consider these rather narrow areas in the Conference.

The President: I thank Ms. Kuznetsova of the Russian Federation for her statement. The last speaker on my list is the representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Ms. Arline Díaz Mendoza.

Ms. Díaz Mendoza (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President, on behalf of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, we congratulate you, Ambassador Salomon Eheth of the Republic of Cameroon, on the extraordinary manner in which you are guiding our work and thank you for organizing this thematic meeting on new types of weapons of mass destruction and new systems of such weapons; radiological weapons. We welcome the manner in which the Republic of Cameroon has planned its presidency in accordance with the agenda of the Conference on Disarmament and in full compliance with the rules of procedure.

We take this opportunity to thank Ambassador Yury Ambrazevich, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Belarus to the United Nations in Geneva, and Ms. Liana Fix, Programme Director for International Affairs at the Körber-Stiftung in Germany, for their important and informative presentations. We would like to extend a warm welcome to Ambassador Stuart Comberbach, Permanent Representative of Zimbabwe, which is a member of the Group of 21.

Mr. President, the debate on emerging technologies in the area of weapons of mass destruction and new systems of such weapons has deepened in recent years, giving rise to growing concern. In the light of this debate, it is becoming increasingly urgent to overcome the current impasse in the Conference. The increase in the military budgets of some developed countries reflects a growing asymmetrical trend that is unprecedented in international law and is driving, inter alia, a proliferation of various types of weapons with no regulation or international control or verification.

The Conference on Disarmament must take responsibility for filling these gaps and address the threats posed by the development of weapons of mass destruction and certain types of strategic weapons. The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela is deeply concerned about the lack of regulation in the development of lethal autonomous and semi-autonomous

weapons. The seriousness of the problem lies, *inter alia*, in the cross-cutting nature of the technology associated with new weapons systems. New developments in technology and artificial intelligence, machine learning, genetics, and biotechnology may be used to refine and strengthen the destructive potential of existing weapons systems, including conventional and nuclear weapons. For Venezuela, the responsibility for war and the use of force and its regrettable consequences lies with humanity.

The absence of human control over these autonomous weapons or their critical functions presents an existential challenge to warfare, which is already inhumane and cruel. The possibility that the critical functions of selecting and attacking targets might lack discrimination, compassion or ethics is repugnant and tantamount to humanity abdicating its duty to ensure peace.

My country supports a complete ban on the development of such weapons. That is what we have stated in the context of the work of the Group of Governmental Experts on Emerging Technologies in the Area of Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems, within the framework of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons. We are talking about an instrument to ban and regulate the use of lethal autonomous systems, the use of semi-autonomous weapons, unmanned military combat aerial vehicles or drones. The Non-Aligned Movement has developed a position in the framework of the Group of Governmental Experts on lethal autonomous weapons systems aimed at pursuing a legally binding document on this. In addition, it has supported the resolution on the role of science and technology in the context of international security and disarmament, recognizing the potential impact, both positive and negative, of the accelerating pace of technological change and advances in science and technology on international security and disarmament.

The President: I thank the representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. Distinguished delegates, before I conclude this thematic discussion, I would like to give our panellists an opportunity to react to some of the comments. I give the floor first to Ms. Liana Fix.

Ms. Fix (Körber-Stiftung): Thank you very much, Mr. President. It was a pleasure, and the discussion and statements were fascinating and very insightful. They reminded me of two further policy recommendations that we have developed at the Körber Strategic Stability Initiative, which I had the impression might be useful to take this discussion further, especially if there are also, to some extent, divergent views on what to focus on and what the general mindset on how to proceed with arms control and disarmament should be.

Let me quickly present to you two further ideas. The first is a general principle that we tried to establish at the Körber Strategic Stability Initiative – namely, that a willingness to manage competition is a precondition for strategic stability. And what we mean and what might be useful for further discussions is that all parties should proceed from a joint understanding that avoiding military conflict will have to involve a basic political willingness to listen and to compromise and to refrain from pursuing strategic invulnerability. And to this end, arms control is a key policy tool to help bring about strategic stability. But cooperation and mutual gains will be necessary for any successful initiative.

And the second idea that I would like to put to the floor is our second recommendation. We have learned the lessons of the cold war – our current understanding of strategic stability is a product of learning from cold war crises. Some of the lessons that we drew from the past seem to be forgotten, especially perhaps with actors who did not take such an active part in the bipolar rivalry of the great Powers during the cold war. Conditions are different today, but we can benefit from looking back at approaches to managing competition in the past to prevent a return to zero-sum and worst-case thinking, which would be a precondition for arms racing and instability. We have to relearn the merits of restraint and of arms control of the cold war and continue a dialogue about the sources of instability that does not necessarily have to be tied to concrete arms control outcomes at the beginning but should establish a common basis and a common understanding of instability and ways to reduce it.

I hope this is useful and I thank you, once again, for the opportunity to present our ideas here before the Conference on Disarmament meeting in plenary.

The President: I thank Ms. Liana Fix for her final, very pertinent, comments. I now give the floor to Ambassador Ambrazevich for his final comments.

Mr. Ambrazevich (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): Mr. President, first of all I would like to thank you for unexpectedly choosing Ms. Liana Fix as my partner today. She complemented what I said very well or, rather, my arguments complemented her arguments. The statement of Belarus was more focused on the practical side of things. Her approaches to the political sector, the political basis for work on agenda items 5, 6 and 7 of the Conference on Disarmament, are very impressive, and the understanding expressed both in her presentation and also in the statements of a number of delegations of the importance and value of global progress in strategic stability are very important to me, both as a panellist and as a diplomat, and are also fully in line with my country's official position.

I also found the idea expressed in the statement of Ambassador Gabriëlse of the Netherlands about the adequacy of the legal framework very interesting. I think that, in the absence of strategic dialogue and strategic stability, the possibility of a contradictory, completely different interpretation of the existing legal instruments highlights the importance of continuing the initiatives mentioned by Ambassador Gabriëlse and which the Netherlands has already taken regarding the matter of whether the legal framework is sufficient. In my view, it is a question which should be put not to international lawyers, but to the specialists working in the areas under consideration.

One small but, in my opinion, very important issue, which has been concerning me in recent days, is that, of the contemporary challenges related to agenda items 5, 6 and 7, not one delegation has mentioned issues related to information, the methods of manipulating it and misinformation. Whoever controls information controls the world – this is applicable not only to business but to politics. No one has raised the issue of the responsible use of information, which I consider the most important factor in international security and the national security of each country. While, as my distinguished colleague from the delegation of France rightly recalled, the Biological Weapons Convention prohibits the development and delivery of biological components, no one in today's society, today's world or the international community prohibits the dissemination in the media landscape of an outright lie, capable of bringing a section of the population out onto the street and getting the political leadership to make the type of changes that were previously achieved through military methods.

In my opinion, cyberthreats are not information as such, and cybersecurity and cyberspace are not synonyms for information security and the information space. I will therefore leave this question open and hope that one day the global process for achieving strategic stability will make it possible to agree on a code of conduct for the information space. Thank you everyone for a very interesting discussion.

The President: Distinguished delegates, before concluding, I would like to thank the panellists and the colleagues who took the floor today in the thematic discussion on item 5 on the agenda of the Conference on Disarmament.

Our next plenary meeting will take place on Friday, 18 June. I am considering convening it in a manner that will also allow for in-person participation for those who would like to participate thus. I will hold consultations on the matter and communicate further information through the Conference secretariat.

As you know, the meeting will be a closing reflection on the presidency of Cameroon prior to the handover of the presidency to the delegation of Canada. Once again, I thank everybody for his or her participation. The meeting is adjourned.

The meeting rose at 12.10 p.m.